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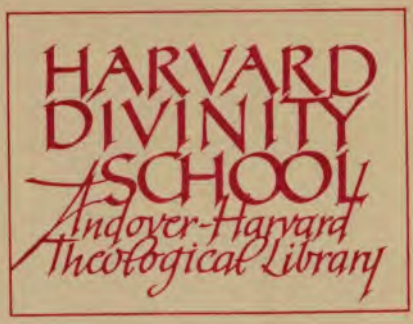
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THE

CHRISTIAN MINISTER'S

REASONS

FOR

BAPTIZING INFANTS,

AND FOR

ADMINISTERING THE ORDINANCE BY SPRINKLING, OR POURING OF WATER.

By STEPHEN ADDINGTON.

He shall sprinkle many nations. *Isaiah.*

PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE, PIETY, AND CHARITY.

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To the Congregation of Protestant Dissenters assembling at Market-Harborough in Leicestershire.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

YOU have in the following pages, the result of a free and serious inquiry into the Sripture-doctrine of Christian Baptism. After reading many controversial tracts on the mode and subjects of this ordinance, I found myself obliged to examine the sacred pages, before I could be thoroughly satisfied either as to the manner or time of life, in which it ought to be administered. Previous to this inquiry, I endeavoured to divest myself of every prejudice, and determined to follow the truth whithersoever it might lead me. Far be it from me to assert, that I have no where mistaken the language of the Holy Spirit in the several passages that either give an account of the administration of Christian Baptism, or tend to explain the nature and design of the institution. But this I hope I can say, that I have endeavoured to enter into the true meaning of them, and have explained them in a sense that appears to me (upon the maturest consideration) most consistent and scriptural. I think myself obliged to tell you, that the inquiry has afforded me abundant satisfaction. The reasons for our practice of baptizing children,

and that by sprinkling or pouring of water, appear to me now in a much stronger light than before; and I am more fully convinced than ever, that the specious objections which are thrown out against it have no solid foundation in reason, or the word of God.

You can bear me witness that, during the eighteen years of my ministry among you, I have by no means been desirous or willing that your sacred hours should be employed in controversial subjects. Yet knowing, that you have always thought it your duty to give up your Infant-offspring to the Lord in this ordinance, and that many of you wished to have the reasons of your conduct herein explained in public for the satisfaction of others, especially the rising generation, that I might not seem ashamed of any doctrine or duty taught in the oracles of eternal truth; I lately delivered three or four discourses among you upon this subject. You have, in this little volume, the substance of those discourses, with some alterations and enlargements. As I then entered upon the subject for your sakes, so it is partly at your desire that I have revised and published my thoughts upon it; and partly for reasons which, in tenderness to others, I suppress here; though some of you are not entirely unacquainted with them. You, therefore, will not expect any farther apology for the publication. And I am not anxious to apologize to others for it; though it be upon a

subject on which so much has been written, that little new can be expected. Yet I would beg leave to observe here, that, of the numerous tracts and volumes that have been written upon Baptism, some are merely on the subject, others only on the mode; many are warm, and indeed angry, debates about words and phrases which this or that Author had before made use of in the controversy: But few, that I have met with, give such a view of the whole subject as seems calculated to afford all desirable satisfaction to a serious and humble inquirer after truth and duty. This I have here attempted; and as I have not written in haste, or with a design to offend, I should not be afraid to vindicate what I have advanced, upon proper occasions: Yet I have neither time nor inclination for controversy; but wish rather to promote the genuine spirit of the gospel, and a practical regard to its sacred institutions; and shall not, therefore, by any means, think myself obliged to take notice of every anonymous or ill-natured retailer of hackneyed observations upon this subject. Nevertheless, if I am convinced, by candid sober sense, that I have been mistaken, either with respect to the mode, or the time of life, in which this ordinance should be administered, I will freely give up my present sentiments and practice, and make my grateful acknowledgments to the kind friend who shall convince me of my error. Until then, I shall, as hitherto, heartily

concur with you in giving up your littles to the Lord in an everlasting covenant.

Only permit me to add, that I hope we are better acquainted both with the nature and influence of Christian principles, than to indulge uncharitable censures of any of our brethren in Christ Jesus, merely because their sentiments on Baptism are different from our own. The consistent piety and true goodness of some who do not administer this ordinance just as we do, entitle them to our fraternal esteem and affection. And let us pity the ignorance and bigotry of others, rather than return railing for railing.

That the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, may make you perfect to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight; that formed on a truly primitive model, ye may continue stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers; and that each of you, by walking in the statutes and ordinances of the Lord blameless, may give joy to ministers and fellow-christians who behold your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ; is, my Friends, the fervent prayer of

Your servant, for Jesus' sake,

STEPHEN ADDINGTON.

Harborough, Sept. 6, 1770.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE ensuing treatise is intended, not so much to amuse as to instruct; by no means to excite an angry contentious spirit, but to promote a practical regard to a divine institution. If it should fall into the hands of any one who has hitherto approved only of adult Baptism by immersion, the Author makes it his request that he would here pause a moment, to ask himself seriously this question, "Am I desirous to know and to do the "will of God in this matter?" If he is resolutely determined to persist in his opinion, in spite of all evidence, and to turn the Scripture-doctrine of Baptism into mere matter of vain jangling, let him proceed no farther. All here attempted is a plain, serious address to candid sober minds; and if any peruse it, who wish to be better informed on the subject, they are advised to read, deliberately, one chapter at a time, and to revise its thoughts in connection with the argument, which they are intended to illustrate and confirm, before they proceed to another. And when they have gone through the whole in this manner, let them compare the reasons offered for baptizing Infants by sprinkling or pouring of water with what has been urged against it, and embrace that opinion which appears to them, on mature thought and

impartial inquiry, best supported by sound reason, credible testimony, and the word of God.

P. S. Besides what is urged in the following work, it may not be amiss in this place to mention a *presumptive* argument in favour of Infant-baptism; viz. That we seem to need such a rite as this; since the birth of a child is an event of great importance to a family, and it must appear a parent's duty,—it cannot but be a *pious* parent's inclination, early to devote his children to God, through Christ; expressing his fervent desires that they may partake, with himself, of the blessings of the Christian covenant. This argument appears to receive additional strength from the practice of our Baptist brethren, (many of them at least) who, feeling the need, propriety, and usefulness of some such rite as we suppose Infant-baptism to be, have invented one of *their own*, which nearly resembles it, excepting in the ceremonial part.

CONTENTS.

PART I.

ON the Mode or Manner of administering Christian Baptism.

CHAP. I.

On the Nature and Perpetuity of Christian Baptism, and the Persons by whom it is to be administered.

CHAP. II.

On Names and Ceremonies in general, and the Rite of Immersion in particular.

CHAP. III.

On the Signification of the Greek Words, βαπτιζω, βαπτισμος, &c. as used in the sacred Scriptures; with remarks on the ancient Jewish Washings.

CHAP. IV.

Baptism recorded in the New Testament, which some have supposed to have been administered by Immersion.

CHAP. V.

Supposed allusions to Immersion examined.

CHAP. VI.

Other Baptisms recorded in the New Testament, that do not appear to have been administered by Immersion.

CHAP. VII.

Sprinkling or pouring Water, in Christian Baptism, proved to be most agreeable to scriptural Representations of the Ordinance and allusions to it.

PART II.

ON the proper subjects of Christian Baptism.

CHAP. I.

Many Considerations to prove, that the Children of professing Christians are included in the Covenant made by God with their Parents.

CHAP. II.

Reasons for administering Baptism, as a Seal of the Christian Covenant, to the Children of professing Christians, particularly the Command of God to Abraham to circumcise his Children.——Our Lord's Commission to his Ministers, Mat. xxviii. 19.—*and the Words of Peter,* Acts. ii. 38, 39.

CHAP. III.

Objections to Infant Baptism considered.

CHAP. IV.

Various Testimonies to prove that Baptism is generally administered to Infants in the Christian Church now, and has been so in former Ages. The practice of the primitive Christian Fathers ascertained from their Writings; and that of the Apostles from the New Testament.

CHAP. V.

The Evil of neglecting to baptize the Children of Christian Parents, and the Advantages of a proper Administration of the ordinance.

CONCLUSION.

1. *Practical Exhortations to Parents whose Children have been baptized.*

2. *To young Persons who have been given up to the Lord in this Ordinance.*

PART I.

ON THE MODE OR MANNER OF ADMINISTERING CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

CHAPTER I.

On the Nature and Perpetuity of Christian Baptism, and the Persons by whom it is to be administered.

§. 1. OUR Lord Jesus Christ, in his commission to his first ministers, just before he ascended to heaven, commanded them * to go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. This ordinance they accordingly administered † and recommended, not for the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God.‡ The apostle Paul speaks of baptized Christians as having put on Christ,§ and as being all baptized into one body.¶

From these and other similar representations of Christian Baptism in the New Testament, it seems "an ordinance intended to signify the separation of the disciples of Christ from an unbelieving and sinful world, to be a peculiar

* Mat. xxviii. 19. † Acts ii. 3. ‡ 1 Pet. iii. 21.
§ Gal. iii. 27. ¶ 1 Cor. xii. 13.

"people to the Lord;" and is to be considered as "an outward seal or token of the covenant of "grace, and of God's receiving his people into "that covenant, and bestowing upon them all its "invaluable blessings."

The covenant of grace is that covenant in which the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, through him, engages to bestow upon his people all the blessings of his love, both here and hereafter.

We call baptism a seal of this covenant, as it is a sensible sign and confirmation of it to the heirs of promise, and not because we apprehend it procures a title to the inheritance of the saints. For that title we acknowledge ourselves altogether indebted to the free and abundant mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Nor do we believe, that this or any external ordinance can, of itself, make us meet to be partakers of that inheritance. If Paul referred to baptism in that expression, which he makes use of in his epistle to Titus,* "the washing of regeneration," he calls it so, not as effecting that change itself, but only as an external token or memorial of it. By a like figure of speech our Lord calls the bread broken at his supper "his body," when no more could be intended, than that it was a memorial of that body, in which he suffered for us. The term, in both cases, being applied to the sign, which, in the

* Tit. iii. 5.

strictest propriety, was only applicable to that which was signified by it. It seems as if those christian fathers who spoke of baptized persons as regenerate, had mistaken these and other figurative expressions of the New Testament. Yet few sentiments, received by Protestants, appear more dangerous or absurd than this, that baptism is the Christian regeneration. It would be inconsistent with the general tenor of the Gospel, and dishonourable to its Author, to suppose that his genuine disciples are distinguished from the rest of mankind only by the washing of water; and equally incredible that any, either young or old, should be renewed in the spirit of their minds by such an external ceremony: nor, while we have instances around us of baptized infidels and reprobates, have we any reason to believe, that the sanctifying influences of divine grace always accompany the administration of baptism.

§. 2. Considering baptism in the light in which it has been represented, we cannot but think it may as properly be administered to the descendants of professing Christians in all ages, as it was to those in the primitive church, who were the first in the families that were called the disciples of Christ. The Christian regeneration, which is signified by it, does not consist merely in the change of a religious profession. A Jew, a Mahometan, or a Heathen, may be convinced of the divine original of the Old and New Testament,

and be persuaded to receive Jesus as the true Messiah, and still continue dead in trespasses and sins. Now the scriptures not only require the infidel to believe, but the sinner to turn from his evil ways. Christ said, at one time, "except a "man be born of water and of the spirit," and at another, "unless he be converted, and become as "a little child, he cannot enter into the kingdom "of heaven." Paul assures us, that "if any man "be in Christ he is a new creature; has crucified "the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof; "is freed from sin, is dead to it; and alive unto "God, as one of his servants, having his fruit un- "to holiness, and the end everlasting life." And as we are often told, that without this renovation of heart and life no one can see the Lord, whatever his religious profession, knowledge, or speculative faith may be, we cannot but think it highly proper that baptism, as a memorial of it, should be continued in the church of Christ. There are few who do not acknowledge the propriety and expediency of public teaching and preaching the Gospel, in all nations and ages; and as our Lord connected baptism with that ordinance in his final instructions to his ministers, and enforced both by the same animating consideration, ("Lo I am with you always, even to the "end of the world!") it seems from thence as if he intended that both should be continued till the end come; until the completion of that age or pe-

riod, which commenced at his resurrection, and will end at his second coming. Some have indeed supposed that baptism was adopted by Christ, and practised by his apostles as a temporary accommodation to the genius and customs of the Jews, who had been used to proselyte-baptism, and many other washings, in, and before the time of our Saviour. But if so, they would, most probably, have confined it to Jewish converts. Yet their Lord's command was to baptize *all nations;* and they accordingly administered this ordinunce to Gentiles as well as Jews, when they came and professed themselves the followers of Jesus. See Acts x. 44—48. "While Peter yet spake, the "Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the "word, and they of the circumsicion, which be-"lieved," (i. e. Christian converts from the Jewish church) "were astonished, because that on "the Gentiles also was poured out of the gift of "the Holy Ghost: Then answered Peter, 'Can "any man forbid water that these should not be "baptized which have received the Holy Ghost "as well as we?' And he commanded them to be "baptized in the name of the Lord."

This passage may serve likewise to obviate another objection urged against the continuation of baptism in the Christian church, viz. that it is superseded by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The apostle Peter, far from saying that their having received the Holy Ghost, rendered it unnecessary

that they should be baptized with water, expressly urges that as a reason for baptizing them. "Can any man forbid water that these should not "be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost "as well as we?" It ought likewise to be remembered, that if baptism be a token of the evangelical covenant, it may as properly be continued during the subsistence of this covenant as circumcision, when adopted by Moses, and interwoven into his dispensation, was continued till that ritual was superseded by the more plain and spiritual institutions of the Gospel, which declared that Jesus nailed the ceremonies of that law to his cross.

§. 3. The apostles were the first persons that our Lord authorized and appointed to administer this ordinance in his church. Their apostolic office as such was peculiar to themselves.—But they were pastors and teachers as well as apostles—appointed to instruct in private, and to administer the ordinances of the Gospel in public. Herein these first ministers of Christ are succeeded by all who are duly qualified for the office of the Christian ministry, and have been regularly introduced into it. And it appears from the history of the church, that such have been used to administer baptism in it, together with all its holy ordinances, ever since it was established to promote that great and gracious design of edifying the body of Christ, for which they are said to have been appointed. Eph. iv. 11, 12.

Pause here a moment, all ye who have been baptized in the name of Jesus, to contemplate the condescension and grace of your heavenly Father. The Almighty, the Lord of heavenly hosts, the high and lofty one who inhabiteth eternity, and whose name is holy, stoops to say of the degenerate children of men, "I will be unto them "a God, and they shall be unto me a people." And he not only enters into the engagement in his written word, but gives a sensible seal and confirmation of it in this holy institution. Examine the comprehensive promise, and you must say, "happy indeed are the people that are in "such a case, happy the people whose God is the "Lord." But forget not, I beseech you, the solemn and eternal truth, that "all are not Israel "that are of Israel." He is not a Christian that is one outwardly alone, nor will that baptism save you which is merely outward in the flesh, but he is a Christian that is one inwardly, and that is the salutary washing of regeneration which is of the Spirit, and by which the conscience is thoroughly purged from dead works to serve the living and the true God. You are admitted to many valuable privileges as the children of the kingdom; but know, that those privileges are so many talents of which you must give an account: and your Lord himself has forewarned you, that to whomsoever much is given, of them much will be required. God grant that when many shall come

from the uttermost ends of the earth to sit down with Christ in his kingdom, you may not be among the children of the kingdom that shall be shut out! To some that will then have to plead, not only that they have been baptized in his name, but that they have even prophesied in that name likewise, he will say, "Depart from me, I never knew you."*

CHAP. II.

On Names and Ceremonies in general, and the right of Immersion in particular.

§. 1. IT is well known, that ministers as well as private Christians, who agree in their sentiments concerning the nature and design of baptism in general, and who think it ought to be continued in the church throughout all ages, are of different opinions as to the mode and the time of life in which the ordinance should be administered. Hence some baptize the infant offspring of professing Christians as well as adults who have not been baptized before, and others baptize none till they are capable of making a profession of Christianity themselves: some baptize by sprinkling and pouring of water, and others insist upon the immersion of the whole body as essential to bap-

* Matt. vii. 21. 23.

tism.—Those who baptize infants are called Pœdobaptists, from one Greek word (παις) which signifies *a child*, and another (βαπτιζω) which is *to baptize*. Such as oppose their principles are called Antipœdobaptists, in which term the Greek preposition (αντι) which signifies *against*, is prefixed to the other word, to denote their opposition to the practice of baptizing infants. These are often called Baptists, and sometimes Anabaptists, on account of their baptizing those again who were baptized in their infancy, the Greek particle (ανα) denoting a repetition.—Whatever reasons there may be for distinguishing Christians who are of different sentiments concerning this ordinance by these different names, certainly no good reason can be assigned for making such distinctions as these the occasions of mutual jealousies, angry quarrels, and uncharitable censures among those, who all profess themselves to be the disciples of one master, members of one universal church, and fellow-heirs of the same heavenly inheritance. It is not, indeed it cannot be expected, that the whole body of Christians, in this imperfect state, should think entirely alike of all the several doctrines and institutions of the Gospel; yet when we observe the carnal divisions which are occasioned by undue attachments to particular names, we could wish they were all lost in that one ancient and honourable appellation of *Christians*, by which the disciples were originally dis-

tinguished at Antioch. Happy world, where all the redeemed of the Lord shall see eye to eye, and be all united in one common principle of love to God and Christ and one another! As brethren let us see to it, that we do not fall out by the way. But while we think differently of this and other appointments of our divine Lord, let us offer our sentiments upon each with a modesty becoming fallible men, and urge every argument with that meekness and candor which he uniformly maintained and strongly recommended.

§. 2. It appears to have been our Lord's will that water should be used in baptism, as bread and wine were in the ordinance of his Supper; but we do not find, that our divine Master has absolutely fixed the quantity of these elements, or the modes of administering them, in either of these ordinances. He often rebuked an intemperate zeal for external forms in general, and cautioned his disciples against an undue dependence upon them; we cannot therefore believe he would encourage it in this particular institution. Both jewish and gentile converts, in the days of the apostles, were fond of introducing a number of their ancient ceremonies into the Christian church. They had been taught a religious regard to them from their infancy, and after having performed them many years as divine rites, they were unwilling entirely to lay them aside. This their zeal for ceremonies, which they had received by tradition from their fathers,

occasioned many warm debates among them, and no little uneasiness to their ministers. Paul refers frequently to these in his epistles, and urges many considerations to take off their attention from modes and forms, as of little moment compared with the principles of the divine life in the soul, and the exercises of it in a well ordered conversation. The passages to this purpose in Paul's epistles are too numerous to be quoted here. But what he says on the distinctions which some of these young converts were eager to make between one day and another, and one kind of meat and another, &c. may, we apprehend, with great justice be applied to the different quantities of water and modes of administering it in the ordinance of baptism. Water commendeth not to God any more in one form or quantity than it does in another.—One esteemeth one mode above another in baptism, and another, in this view, esteemeth each alike. Let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind; but let not him that washeth with water in this ordinance, by sprinkling or pouring it upon the subject, despise him that administers it by immersion; nor let him that plunges, judge him that sprinkles; for if each does it to the Lord, there is reason to hope that God doth receive him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth.—See Rom. chap. xiv. and 1 Cor. chap. viii.

§. 3. After a serious and attentive enquiry into the scripture doctrine of Christian baptism, we

are obliged to declare, that we have not found a single passage in the whole book of God, in which the immersion of the whole body is required in this ordinance. That was not the usual manner of washing with water under the Mosaic dispensation, but if it had been, we cannot think that Jesus would have enjoined it upon his followers in all ages and nations. He, in many instances, paid a condescending regard to the genius and customs of the people among whom he lived; and his apostles after him have recommended to Christians that they give none offence, either to Jew or Gentile, or the church of God.—The usual methods of baptizing by immersion might not, perhaps, eighteen hundred years ago, be offensive in Judea, nor can we say that it would disgust the uncultivated inhabitants of the south of Africa even now; but it is very certain that the custom of publicly plunging multitudes of men and women, either naked (as some have done) or in thin vestments, or in their usual dress, is accounted an indecency by many in more civilized nations. When we bathe, either for amusement or health, it is usually in some retired situation, or in a convenient apartment, with a few of our own sex, that we may not seem to transgress the rules of decorum: though if any do act indecently in such instances, they bring the reproach upon themselves alone, and not upon the holy name whereby they are called. But if Paul * could pronounce it uncome-

* 1 Cor. xii. 13.

ly that a woman should pray unto God uncovered, professing Christians in general, and women in particular, should see to it that they have the authority of an express command of Christ, before they submit to be thus plunged in water, with all the solemnity of a Christian institution, even in secret, and much more in the presence of persons of both sexes, and of all characters, lest they offend some, and give occasion to others to speak evil of the Gospel, and of their divine Master. It likewise deserves notice, that our divine Lord not only spake of his yoke as easy, but manifested a disposition to make it so, in the tender regard he expressed to the lives and health of mankind in general, and of his own disciples in particular. On the authority of that declaration of his heavenly Father, "I will have mercy and not "sacrifice," he even vindicated his followers in breaking through a restriction of the Mosaic law, by plucking some ears of corn when they were an hungered on the sabbath day.† And can we think that this tender and compassionate Jesus would universally require the performance of a rite that, in many seasons and climates, would be not only burdensome, but unsafe, both to people and ministers? As he said in that case of the sabbath, "it was made for man, and not man for the sabbath"; so may we say of this institution, Baptism was made for man, and is therefore to be administered in a

† Matt. xii. 1---7.

way that may be most suitable and profitable to him; and not man for baptism, so as that he should be obliged to submit to it in a form that would be distressing to his spirits, and hazardous to his constitution. Though there were special reasons for God's appointing the painful rite of circumcision as a token of his covenant of old, yet it is not easy to say why such a mode should be preferred under the mild and spiritual dispensation of the Gospel, as greatly agitates the spirits of many adults, discomposes their minds, and often renders them very unfit for the exercise of proper thoughts and affections, and indeed utterly incapable of them. Nay, we may easily conceive of many cases in which the immersion of the whole body in water would, in all human probability, be instant death to young and old, and of some situations and circumstances in which it would be absolutely impracticable. Travellers inform us of countries in which they have searched in vain, for many miles together, for a quantity of water sufficient to quench their thirst; and we have known seasons in our own country in which, either through the parching heat of the sun in summer, or hard frosts in winter, it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, in many places, to procure water sufficient for immersion: so that, on all these considerations, it seems highly incredible that our Lord should require that particular mode as indispensably necessary to our being duly set apart as his disciples.

CHAP. III.

On the scriptural significations of the Greek Words βαπτιζω, to baptize, and βαπτισμος, Baptism; with Remarks on the ancient Jewish Washings.

SOME writers have asserted, that immersion is required in every command to baptize with water, because, say they, the Greek word, βαπτιζω, used, for baptizing, signifies to dip or plunge. We shall produce several passages in which this word is made use of, both in the original of the New Testament, and in the Greek translation of the Old, and leave it to the candid reader to judge. That version of the Old Testament called the Septuagint, (though perhaps not so old as has been pretended) was undoubtedly in being and credit at and before the time of our Saviour.* It has been often acknowledged that the primitive word βαπτω signified to *wash* in general, either by dipping or in any other way; but it should be observed that John is no where called βαπτης, the dipper, nor is this ordinance called βαμμα, dipping. The terms βαπτιστης and βαπτισμα, applied to him and to it, are evidently formed from βαπτιζω, a derivative word; and all who are acquainted with the original lan-

* For the true sense of the word in those passages in which it occurs, in that version of the apocryphal books, the reader may consult a sensible tract, entitled "Dipping not the only scriptural way of baptizing;" in which are likewise many other judicious remarks upon the subject.

guage of the New Testament, must not only know that there is a difference between primitive and derivative words, but likewise that those in ζω are frequently diminitives; so that as βαπτω signifies to wash, βαπτιζω is to wash a little: but even βαπτω itself occurs in some places where there is not the least appearance of dipping. We find (δεδαφη) made use of * to describe the fall of the dew from heaven upon Nebuchadnezzar. It is indeed rendered in our English bible, he was wet, washed, or baptized, with the dew of heaven; not surely as being plunged in it, but as it distilled, or fell in small drops, upon him. The Israelites (if the external mode is at all referred to in the expression) seem to have been baptized in like manner unto Moses † in the cloud and the sea, when the former descended in refreshing showers, or, as it is expressed,‡ in a plentiful rain upon them; and when they were sprinkled by the waves of the latter in their passage through it. The Egyptians were indeed plunged in the sea, and, if that may be called baptism, both they and their chariots and horses were baptized in it together, when the depths covered them, and they sank as lead in the mighty waters; but we have no account of the immersion of the Israelites in it; so far from it, we are told expressly, § that they walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea.

* Dan. v. 21. † 1 Cor. x. 2. ‡ Ps. lxviii. 9.
§ Exod. xiv. 29.

And yet St. Paul says of them (not of the Egyptians) they were baptized unto Moses *in*, or (as the word might be rendered) *by* or *at* the sea. Reasons for translating the Greek preposition (εν) *by* as well as *in*, will be offered elsewhere.—In the meanwhile we beg leave to cite another passage from the New Testament, in which we apprehend the word βαπτιζω does not signify to dip or plunge. The evangelist Mark uses this word * when speaking of the washings of the Pharisees—"When they come from market, except they wash" (we render it, but it is in the original "except they are baptized) they eat not." And they not only washed themselves, but (says that sacred writer) many other things they hold, (βαπτισμους) the baptizings of their pots and tables or beds, as the word (κλινη) frequently, and indeed generally signifies.—The Jewish washings for purification, it is well known, were ordered to be performed by sprinkling. In this manner persons and things were solemnly set apart to sacred uses.—Lev. iii. 11. "Moses sprinkled of the anointing oil upon the altar seven times, &c. to "sanctify it, and he poured it upon Aaron's head "to sanctify him." See also Lev. xiv. 14—17. The first ministers of the Gospel were left apart for their sacred office in like manner, when they were baptized with the Holy Ghost.—And there seems a peculiar propriety in setting apart all

* Mark vii. 4, 5.

Christians thus to the Lord, who, as having received an unction or an anointing from the Holy One, are called a royal priesthood, an holy nation, and kings and priests unto God. See 1 Pet. ii. 9. 1 John ii. 20—27. Rev. v. 10. The priests were commanded † "to sprinkle upon him that "was to be cleansed from the leprosy seven "times." &c. Again, "A clean person shall take "hyssop, and dip it in water, and sprinkle it up- "on an unclean person who hath touched a "bone,"‡ &c.—In like cases there mentioned, and others of the like nature, they were ordered by God to be thus purified;—but the superstitious Pharisees washed themselves at times not appointed by the law, and made use of many ceremonies which were never enjoined by their divine Legislator. Yet it seems utterly incredible that they should plunge their whole bodies in water before every meal, or that they should dip their tables and beds at all. Indeed several very learned writers have proved that the Jews had no such custom either then or before. It would be weak indeed to insinuate, that these washings were by dipping as well as sprinkling, because the priest was ordered to dip the hyssop, &c. into the water in order to sprinkle the unclean. Did he dip the leper? or is the baptized dipped because the minister dips his hand into the bason in order to take out water to pour upon it?

† Lev. xiv. 7. ‡ Numb. xix. 18.

But it is said, the molten sea was made for the priests to wash in, 2 Chron. iv. 6. And are we to infer from thence that they were to be plunged in it? that general order is explained, Exod. xxx. 19. Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat.—Thus, it is most probable, the Pharisees washed themselves before their meals in the time of our Saviour.—Hence they came to Jesus, saying,† "Why do thy disciples "transgress the tradition of the elders? for they "wash not their hands when they eat bread." And it appears from 2 Kings iii. 11. this ceremonial washing of the hands was sometimes performed by pouring water upon them.—Elisha poured water on the hands of Elijah. Yet we find persons thus washed are spoken of as baptized in the forecited Mark vii. 4, 5. Let it be observed, that we say not merely that the term is applied to the parts thus washed, but that the persons themselves, to whose hands and feet only water had been thus applied, are spoken of as baptized; and therefore they may be said to be baptized likewise, to whose faces water is applied by pouring or sprinkling. It is very evident that these Jewish sprinklings are called baptisms by the writer to the Hebrews, ch. ix. We shall have occasion to examine that context more particularly in another place. Let the impartial, from these few remarks, judge whether it be right to assert, that

† Matt. xv. 2.

dipping or plunging is the true and only import of the word Baptism in the sacred scriptures; nay, whether sprinkling or pouring is not the ancient and scriptural mode of baptizing.

CHAP. IV.

Baptisms recorded in the New Testament, which are supposed, by some, to have been administered by Immersion.

§. 1. IT has been often asserted, as an indisputable fact, that John, the forerunner of our Lord, baptized by immersion, and his example therein is urged as obligatory upon all Christians; but we must confess we have not yet met with satisfactory evidences of the fact itself; however, we will for a few moments take it for granted.—Yet if John did plunge his disciples, we see no reason from thence to conclude that all the disciples of Christ should be baptized in the same manner. John was not a minister of Christ, but only a messenger sent before to prepare the way for him. His baptism was no Christian ordinance. He administered it before the commission of the great Head of the Christian church was issued out†, and merely as in expectation of the Messiah's kingdom. Hence we find *his* distinguished from Christian baptism; and some, who had been baptized into John's baptism, seem to have been bap-

† Acts xix. 3, 4, 5.

tized again in the name of Jesus Christ. Paul asked a number of young converts at Ephesus, who had not so much as heard whether there was any Holy Ghost, "Unto what then were ye baptized?" and they said, "Unto John's Baptism."—Then said Paul, "John verily baptized with the bap-"tism of repentance, &c. and when they heard "this they were baptized in the name of the Lord "Jesus."* And accordingly (in another place) we find John's disciples upon this principle distinguished from the disciples of Christ, Mark ii. 18. "The disciples of John came to Jesus and said to "him, why do John's disciples fast, but thy dis-"ciples fast not?" Now if John himself was no Christian minister; if his disciples were not, as such, the disciples of Christ, nor his baptism a Christian ordinance, Christians are not surely from thence obliged to be dipped or plunged, if John did baptize by immersion. But one should rather think that he did not, from the manner in which he speaks of his baptism; nay, that he administered water in this ordinance in a manner somewhat similar to that in which the Spirit was poured down upon the apostles on the day of Pen-

* Some learned men, unwilling to think that John's disciples were baptized again by the apostles, tell us the 5th verse is to be understood not as the words of Luke but of Paul;—intimating, that when they were baptized into John's baptism, they were in effect baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. But (if it may appear consistent with the deference due to the respectful names that have honoured the interpretation) it seems a forced and unnatural turn given to the words themselves, and inconsistent with other representations of John's baptism.

tecost.—He said to his disciples,† "I baptize you "with water unto repentance, but he that cometh "after me shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost "and with fire." How were they afterwards baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire? they were not surely plunged or laid down in the fire. No, that fire descended upon their heads. And John calls this their being baptized with it. We see a propriety in this allusion, considering baptism as administered by pouring water upon the head and face; but there is not the least resemblance between that effusion of the Spirit on the head, and the immersion of the whole body in baptism. And indeed it ought to be remembered, that John was of the line of the priests, who had been always used to perform their purifications by sprinkling, and therefore it is not to be supposed he would exchange that ancient mode for dipping, without the authority of an express command, which does not appear in any of his instructions. However, as several arguments have been advanced to prove that John baptized by immersion, we shall examine them separately.

§. 2. As we read of John's baptizing (*w*) in Jordan, many conclude from thence that he plunged his disciples in the river. We will not absolutely say that he did not; but it does not by any means appear to us certain from that expression that he did. It has been observed already, that though the apostles are said to be baptized with

† Matt. iii. 11.

fire, few will assert that they were plunged into it. Yet there is the same Greek preposition (εν) in both places.—The apostle speaking of Christ says,* "he came not (εν) by water only, but (και) by water and blood." There the same word (εν) is translated *by*; and with justice and propriety; for we know no good sense in which we could say he came *in* water. It has been remarked that εν is more than a hundred times in the New Testament rendered *at*; and in a hundred and fifty others it is translated *with*. If it be rendered so here, "John baptized at Jordan," or, "with the water of Jordan," there is no proof from thence that he plunged his disciples in it. There is not a word of immersion or dipping in any of these passages.

§. 3. It is often urged, that John's choosing a place to baptize in where there was much water, is a certain proof that he baptized in a way that required more water than would be needed for sprinkling; but, upon an attentive and impartial inquiry into the several circumstances of the case, we cannot find in it any the least evidence of his baptizing by immersion. Let it be observed in the first place, that the sacred writers no where speak of his plunging any one of his disciples in these waters; nay, they mention several circumstances both with regard to him and them, that may account for his choosing such a situation for baptizing, though he only poured water upon them in his

* 1 John v. 6.

baptism. He might take the hint for administering his baptism of repentance from an order given to the priests of old, who were commanded to take the unclean leper to a running water, and there sprinkle upon him that was to be cleansed from his leprosy seven times. Levit. xiv. 4—7.

Besides, we well know that this holy man spent his time chiefly in the fields; there he preached, and thither the people resorted to him. When alone, he was generally in a dry and barren wilderness, to secure to himself the advantages of a devout retirement.—But when he engaged in his publick ministrations, he would naturally choose a situation like that in the neighbourhood of Enon, (a town eight miles from Scythopolis) in which there were πολλα υδατα, many streams or rivulets, as most proper both for the accommodation of his hearers, and the administration of this ordinance, in whatever way he administered it. It is said,* "that there went out to him Jerusa-
"lem, and all Judea, and all the region round a-
"bout Jordan."—Enon's many streams would not only afford an agreeable refreshment, but be indispensably necessary to this great multitude in so warm a climate, especially in the summer season: they would likewise enable him to baptize his followers (by pouring water upon them) so much the more expeditiously; and he would by this means avoid that disorder and confusion,

* Matt. iii. 5.

which their crowding upon him all together in one place might occasion. It has been often said, that a little water in a bason would have been sufficient to sprinkle them; but John would certainly have needed a much larger quantity to baptize Jerusalem, and all Judea, and the inhabitants of all the region round about Jordan; however, as he was not provided with any utensils of that sort, or even with any quantity of water itself in the wilderness, it was most easy and natural for him to meet his numerous disciples at the brook side, and there to pour water upon them as a significant emblem of those influences of the Spirit, by which, if true penitents, their hearts were sprinkled from an evil conscience. Indeed, it seems, in the nature of things, highly improbable, that John should have baptized this vast multitude by immersion. As they were of both sexes, modesty would forbid his plunging them naked.—If they had no other clothes with them than those on their backs, they must be subjected to many inconveniencies by continuing there, or returning to their distant abodes wet as they came out of the river; and there is not the least reason for supposing they were all provided with proper changes of apparel, especially as many came, doubtless, merely out of curiosity, without any intention of being baptized. From all these considerations taken together, we conclude that it was not for the sake of immersion that John chose to baptize in the neighbour-

hood of Enon, where there were many rivulets of water. There is certainly no proof from thence of his administering the ordinance in that manner.

§. 4. Some infer that our Lord was plunged, from the expression which the evangelist makes use of to describe his return from the water side after he had been baptized by John; but surely that, at best, is a very hasty inference.* Jordan, like other rivers, probably ran in the lower ground, and indeed we know that there are hills near it.—His return from the river side *must* therefore (if properly expressed) be represented by the phrase of his ascending or coming up. But still we are told, that it is said he come up *out* of the river, which implies his having been *in* it. Indeed, as there is not a word said of the manner in which our Lord was baptized, not so much as the least appearance of an argument in favour of immersion can be drawn from hence, unless it can be proved that the Greek preposition (*απο*) here used to express his coming from the water, neces-

* An ancient eastern history of Christ, written in Persic, speaks of this his baptism as follows: "The Lord Jesus Christ entered into the sea, and John, with all humility, baptized him with his hand, and washed him, by casting water on his head." And the learned John Gregory, informs us, that, "when, as in the primitive times, the rites of baptism were performed in rivers and fountains, the persons to be baptized stood up and received that sacrament; and thence the word *Anada*, which signifies to stand up, is used in the Arabic and Syriac gospels for baptizing." Agreeably to this we are told, that children to be baptized in the ancient Greek church were usually set up right in a font, and had water poured upon them; it was poured upon men and women kneeling.

sarily implies that he had plunged in it. But every one that knows any thing of that language, and has read his Greek Testament with the least attention, must have met with scores of passages in which it signifies no more than *from*. We shall only select a few from this same evangelist Matthew. John himself uses it thus in his address to the Pharisees who came to his baptism, in ver. 7. of the chapter in which we have this account of his baptizing Jesus. "Who hath warned you to "*flee* from the wrath to come?" not *out of*.— All must see the impropriety of translating it so there. As likewise when our Lord says to his disciples,* "*From* him that would borrow of thee "turn not thou away." And in an address † to his heavenly Father, "I thank thee, O Father, because thou hast hid these things "*from* the wise, "&c." We shall pass by many others, and only quote one passage in the last chapter of this evangelist,‡ in which it is equally plain that the preposition ἀπὸ is made use of to signify, not *out of*, but only *from*. "The angel rolled back the stone "*from* the door." Now, unless we are obliged to suppose the stone was in the door, because it is said that it was rolled (ἀπὸ) from it, why must we infer that our Lord had been in the water, because it is said he came up (ἀπὸ) *from* it? By this time we apprehend, the impartial reader is convinced that no great stress is to be laid upon this

* Chap. v. 42. † Chap. xi. 25. ‡ Chap. xxviii. 2.

argument in proof of our Lord's immersion; nay, that it cannot be justly inferred from hence, that he was ever in the water at all.

§. 5. Another argument in favour of immersion is drawn from the account of Philip and the Eunuch; it is said "they went down both "(εις) into the water, both Philip and the Eu- "nuch, and he baptized him." But the sacred historian only mentions their going to the water, and Philip's baptizing the eunuch, without saying one word of the manner in which he baptized him, whether by dipping him in the water, or pouring the water upon him.—Some reply, "it "is not said merely that they went *to* the wa- "ter, but *into* it." So indeed we read it in our English bible; but such as attend impartially to the two following remarks, will see no reason to conclude from thence that the eunuch was baptized by immersion. In the first place, if the expression of their going down into the water necessarily includes dipping them, Philip was dipped as well as the eunuch; for what is said of one is said of both; but this, we presume, is more than will be asserted by the most strenuous advocates for immersion. And if the expression does not assert this of both, it asserts it of neither. Certainly, they might both go into the water without being, either of them, plunged in it. It is farther to be observed, that the Greek preposition (εις) which is translated *into* in this passage, often signifies no more than *to*, or *unto*. We shall only select the

few following texts, out of many in the New Testament, where it is evidently used in that sense. Our Saviour says,* "I am not sent but (εἰς) unto "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." We often meet with the expressions believing (εἰς) *in* Christ, and (ἐπὶ) *on* his name.—Paul repeatedly speaks of the believer's faith as counted to him (εἰς) *for* righteousness or justification.†—Every one would perceive the impropriety of translating it *into*, in any of these places. Nay, in Acts xxviii. 14. it is translated *toward*—we went toward Rome; and that it was intended to signify no more is evident from the next words:—"and from thence, when the "brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far "as Appii Forum," &c.—Some perhaps will say, "that the word is not here used in connection "with water? and though it is not proper to "speak of going *into* sheep, or believing *into* "righteousness, yet there is no impropriety in "saying of Philip and the eunuch, that they went "*into* the water."—Nor is there any impropriety in saying that they went *to* the water. This the original term expresses with certainty, and no more. And if there are two translations of a word, one of which is certainly true, and the other may be false, it is easy to say which the wise and candid would prefer.—We must observe farther, that the argument drawn from the word here used to express the return of Philip and the eunuch *from* the water, is equally inconclusive, ver. 39. ὅτε ἀνε-

* Matt. xx. 24. † Rom. iii. & x. 10.

βαντες εκ του ὑδατος, which our translators render, When they were come up out of the water.—Travellers and historians inform us, that the stream was only a small rivulet in a hilly country, which even lower down is sometimes dried up in summer, and the place at which Philip baptized the eunuch is thought to have been at the foot of a mountain which is near its source. Hence the propriety of the word ανεβησαν, to describe their return from the brook side; and as to the preposition εκ, *out of it*, is so far from being its invariable signification, that it signifies no more than *from*, in a variety of passages in the New Testament, out of which it may suffice to select the few following: John ix. 1. A man blind (εκ γενετης) *from* his birth. 2 Cor. v. 1. We have a building (εκ Θεου) *of*, or *from* God. In 1 John iv. the same expression often occurs. Rev. iii. 10. I will keep thee (εκ της ωρας του πειρασμου) from the hour of temptation. Rev. xix. 5. A voice came (εκ του θρονου, we render it out of, but it plainly implies no more than) from the throne. Upon the whole, it does not appear from the scripture-account that Philip plunged the eunuch, or even that they went into the water at all, but only that they went down to the water (or water-side,) that Philip baptized him; and that they then came up from thence, and went on their journey.

CHAP. V.

Texts examined, in which some suppose there are allusions to Immersion, as the original Mode of baptizing.

WHAT is said of the Israelites,* as baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, has been taken notice of already in the third chapter.

§. 1. Another passage to the same purpose is Luke xii. 50. where our Lord says to his disciples, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

This he said long after his being baptized of John, and therefore could not refer to that. He speaks of scenes then before him; whether in his life or at his death, is not certain: nor can we absolutely say, that his thoughts were confined merely to those transactions through which he was to pass before his abasement in the grave. The terms are certainly figurative, and it is not easy to ascertain their precise meaning; every hypothesis therefore, founded upon this passage, must be very precarious. A strong imagination, or a prejudiced mind, may find an object, and then point out a resemblance in many particulars, but no reader of judgment and caution will strain so obscure an allusion. Indeed it is most generally supposed that our Saviour here, as also when he said to the sons of Zebedee,† "Can ye drink

* 1 Cor. x. 2. † Mark x. 38.

of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with ?" 'referred to his sufferings ; but what was there in the mode of his sufferings, either in the garden of Gethsemane, at the bar of Pilate, or when he was lifted up upon the cross, that resembled the mode of plunging ?

§. 2. Equally groundless is the argument in favour of immersion taken from those words of Peter,‡ "The long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water ; the like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us, (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

The apostle, in this context, speaks of the conduct of God towards the degenerate inhabitants of the old world. They had provoked him by their abominations, and he threatened them with an overwhelming deluge. But he would not destroy them without giving them space to repent. He sent warnings of his judgment to his faithful servant Noah, and, by him, to the rest of mankind. At the same time he likewise gave him instructions to provide for his own safety and that of his family, as well as for the preservation of every species of animals, by building a large

‡ 1 Pet. iii. 21.

vessel (called an ark) of dimensions sufficient to contain them, and the provisions necessary for them, while the flood should continue. Noah took the warning himself, communicated it to others, and prepared an ark of a form and size agreeable to the directions which God had given. Peter here represents Christ as preaching by his Spirit in Noah to those sinners. Great forbearance and long-suffering, he says, were exercised towards them while the ark was preparing. But they hardened their hearts against his admonitions till the flood came, according to the word of the Lord, and swept them away in one common and awful desolation, and hurried their guilty spirits into the infernal prison, where they are reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day. This seems to be the meaning of the 19th verse. The destruction was so general, that only eight souls or lives were preserved, and these, says our apostle, were saved (δι ὕδατος) by or through the water. This phrase seems to be used in the same sense in which we speak of persons on a journey travelling through such a country, or in a ship sailing or passing through such a sea or streight, &c. So those in Noah's ark were carried safe through the waters of the flood by means of that vessel which he, according to divine appointment, had prepared for them. And then the sacred writer adds,—the like figure whereunto (or an antitype to which) doth

now save us, *even* baptism. By calling baptism an antitype, the apostle teaches us, that there is some resemblance between this christian ordinance, and that ancient institution of God. It has been said, that Noah's going into the ark was an emblem of a person's going into the water by immersion. "The ark, a like figure whereunto, even baptism;" that is (upon this interpretation) baptism resembles the ark, because we go into baptism as Noah went into the ark.—But it should be observed that Peter speaks of a resemblance, not between the ark and the water, but between the ark and the ordinance of baptism. And it seems equally improper, after speaking of the voluntary action of going on board a vessel upon the water, to add, a like figure whereunto we have, in a person that is plunged into the water. That we might not thus mistake his meaning, or misapply the figure, he explains it himself. The ark saved Noah and his family, bearing them safely through the waters of the flood; and baptism saves us, as a solemn token of our admission into that covenant, which engages for our preservation here, and a state of complete and everlasting happiness hereafter, through Jesus Christ. Herein likewise the antitype corresponds to the type.—Baptism is both a token and means of salvation to believers and their seed, as the ark was to righteous Noah and his offspring. Thus the resemblance designed is in the saving tendency of both, and the original words might, with great

justice, be so rendered, as to make this designed resemblance more apparent to an English reader than it now is in our present version.—"Wherein" (meaning the ark) "few, i. e. eight souls were saved, as they by it were safely carried through the water; an antitype to which, as it now saves us, is "baptism." And if the apostle only asserts that baptism resembles the ark in this circumstance, *that it saves*, or is a token of the gospel covenant by which salvation is obtained, with what justice can this passage be produced as alluding to the mode of baptizing by immersion? Will any say that baptism by plunging is more effectual to salvation than when the ordinance is administered by sprinkling or pouring of water? Our apostle, knowing the superstitious attachment of the Jews, and of some jewish converts, to their ceremonial purification,† and the undue stress which they were inclined to lay upon them, teaches them here that baptism does not save, as a mere external form of purity, unless it be accompanied with the sanctification of the Spirit, that may enable us, with a good conscience towards God, "to give an answer to those who ask a reason of the hope that is in us, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

§. 3. Another passage, in which some suppose there is a more evident allusion to immersion, is Rom. vi. 4. "We are buried with him by bap-

† For the manner in which those jewish purifications were performed, see Chap. III.

tism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."—And to the same effect is Col. ii. 11, 12. where the apostle (after mentioning the circumcision of Christ) adds, "buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised him from the dead."

It hath been often said that Paul alludes here to immersion, and some have even inferred from hence, that baptism was appointed to commemorate the burial and resurrection of Christ. But this is certainly interpreting the passage in a sense quite inconsistent with many plain and express representations of the nature and design of baptism elsewhere in the word of God, and making the two distinct positive institutions of the gospel interfere with one another.—Besides, if baptism be a memorial of Christ's burial and resurrection, surely it should be administered after the ordinance of his supper, which celebrates his death: and indeed, we should expect, that all who consider it in this light, would repeat it as often as they repeat the memorial of his death. If Christ has instituted two positive rites, one to commemorate his death, and the other his burial and resurrection, we know no good reason that can be given for observing the memorial of his death every month or two, and that of his burial and resurrection only once in our lives. But

baptism is not represented in that light, either here or any where else in the word of God. Paul is evidently speaking of the Christian's death unto sin, and revival to God and righteousness; and, representing baptism as a type or token of that, he gives us a view of the nature and design of the ordinance, every way consistent with what is elsewhere said of it in the word of God. Christians are frequently spoken of as dead and crucified with Christ; dead unto sin, &c. and yet alive; quickened by the spirit, and made alive unto God through his Son Jesus. And as the first principles of this death unto sin, and life unto righteousness, are effected by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, so our apostle says here, "we are buried into this death by baptism," that being either a means or a token of it. That he referred herein to this great change is apparent from the manner in which he introduces the words, and from what he says immediately after them, ver. 7. In the whole context he represents Christians as "dead to sin, buried into this death at their baptism, planted together in the likeness of his death, having the old man crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, and that we might live no longer in it, but that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life." He speaks in like terms when he intro-

duces the phrase of being buried with Christ in his epistle to the Colossians, chap. ii. 11—13. "Putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead: and you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses."—Thus we see the death and revival here said to be signified in baptism, is not the humiliation of Christ in the grave and his rising again, but the mortification of sin in the souls of the regenerate, and their recovery to the life of God by the grace of the gospel of Jesus. Therefore the supposition of Paul's alluding here to the mode of immersion in baptism, as bearing a resemblance to the burial and resurrection of Christ, is entirely founded on a mistaken interpretation of the passage. Without referring in the least to that, or any other mode of administering the ordinance, Paul gives us an account of the nature and design of it, as figuring not any scenes, through which our Redeemer passed, but that great change on the heart of the true Christian convert, which is effected by the washing of regeneration; which, says this apostle,* "he hath shed, poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."

* Tit. iii. 6.

Though we are well aware that different turns have been given to those words in 1 Cor. xv. 29. yet, if understood in the sense that appears to us most natural and proper, they concur with the sentiments he expresses in this and many other parts of his writings. "Else what shall they do" (says he) "that are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?" This is one, among other arguments, which the apostle urges to confirm the faith of such as doubted of the resurrection of the dead. If the dead rise not, our conduct, as Christians, is unaccountable and foolish; and our condition of all the most miserable. If there be no resurrection, "what shall they do," what a part will they appear to have acted, who, in Christian baptism, have been initiated among those that avow themselves dead to the sinful pleasures of sense in the present life, in which such indulge themselves without restraint as have no expectation of an hereafter? How pitiable is their situation, who in consequence of being thus publickly entered among the followers of Christ, are exposed daily to death, in its most dreadful forms, in hopes of a happy resurrection! Instead of standing thus in jeopardy, in extreme danger of our lives, as professing Christians every day, if the dead rise not, I would renounce this self-denying scheme of Christianity, and say freely, Let us eat and drink without restraint, and in-

dulge ourselves in every gratification of sense and appetite. Some suppose Paul alludes herein to a custom among the primitive Christians of baptizing over the sepulchres of the dead martyrs, in token of their readiness to follow them; and it cannot be thought that they were plunged in baptism over those graves.

Having examined all the most plausible arguments for the mode of dipping or plunging in baptism, we shall mention

CHAP. VI.

Other Baptisms recorded in the New Testament, that do not appear to have been administered by Immersion.

§. 1. WE are told, that soon after Saul's conversion, a messenger from Heaven appeared to Ananias, a disciple of Christ at Damascus, and commanded him to go to the house of Judas in that city, and enquire there for one Saul of Tarsus. He at first objected what he heard of Saul's character, &c. but being assured that he was a chosen vessel to bear the name of Christ to the Gentiles, &c. it is added,† "Ananias went his way and entered into the house, and putting his hands on him, &c. he received sight forthwith, and arose and was baptized. And when he re-

† Acts ix. 17, 18.

ceived meat (which he had not of three days, ver. 9.) he was strengthened."

It is very evident, that this all passed in the house of Judas, and the whole seems to have been transacted in a very little time. Had Judas a bath in his house? or did he order a large tub to be brought in, and water sufficient to dip Saul there? The scripture says neither, nor is any one circumstance mentioned to countenance either supposition. Where then is the proof or probability of his being baptized by immersion?

§. 2. When Peter went to preach the gospel to a great number of Gentiles that were met together in the house of the centurion Cornelius in Cæsarea, it is said,* "that the Holy Ghost fell on them that heard the word.—And Peter said, can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." Is any thing said here that should induce us to think that Cornelius had proper conveniences in his house for plunging these converts? Peter's words are remarkable: "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized?" The plainest and most natural meaning of that expression is, Can any forbid water being brought? If he had thought of going to a bath or brook, he would rather have said, Can any forbid that these should

* Acts ix. 19.

go to the water, or that they should be put *into* the water, to be baptized.

§. 3. Another instance to the purpose is that in Acts xvi. 25—33. As Paul and Silas were singing the praises of God in a prison at Philippi, suddenly, at midnight, there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, the doors opened, and the bands of the prisoners loosed; the keeper of the prison waking, and seeing the prison doors open was terribly alarmed, took a light and sprang *into* the dungeon where Paul and Silas were, fell down before them, brought them out, and, after enquiring of them the way of salvation, it is said, "he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes and was baptized, he and all his straightway."*—Can any unprejudiced reader find the least hint in this narrative of Paul's plunging the jailor and all his there at midnight? Not a word is said of his having any place convenient for dipping them. To assert that it was not in the house, because we are told the jailor took Paul and Silas out, seems little better than a perversion of the plain meaning of the sacred historian's words. It is said, (ver. 24.) they had been thrust into the inner prison—and the jailor, having taken a light, ran in thither to them—and brought them out—out from whence? It needs no comment: he brought them out of the

* Acts xvi. 25—33.

inner prison, into which he had before thrust them. And did he then take or send them out of his house? so far from it, that we are told he brought them into his house, and set meat before them, &c. that he and all his therefore were baptized there, seems as evident as that they were baptized at all; but that they should be all plunged at that time of night, or indeed that the apostles, whose backs were galled with the stripes they had received but a few hours before, should then attempt to dip them, is as improbable as that the jailor's house had any reservoir of water in which they could plunge them.

§. 4. A forth instance is in Acts ii. 41. where, speaking of Peter, the sacred writer says, "They that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added about three thousand souls."

It seems highly improbable, that the three thousand which are here said to have been baptized and added to the church in one day, should have been all plunged in the time, separately, by the twelve apostles; and still more incredible is it, that they would dip such multitudes of men and women together, unless they had been provided with suitable changes of apparel, which there is no reason to think they were, or could be, at so short a warning, and so far as many of them were from their stated abodes. Some, justly apprehensive that the undertaking was too much

for the twelve apostles, and yet unwilling to think of their admitting these converts into the church before they had been under the water, have conjectured that they called in the assistance of the seventy disciples; and then, dividing the work equally among the eighty-two, each would have only thirty-six to his share. But this is all mere conjecture.—There is not a word said of the seventy disciples in any part of this narrative. And as to the apostles, it would not give us the most favourable opinion, either of their religion or of their Master, to think of their being called, as the minister of Christ, to stand, all of them, in the water from morning to night, each plunging between two and three hundred of both sexes, and of all sizes. Few are equal to the undertaking, nor is such a degree of bodily strength recorded as one of the qualifications of the apostles, nor required of those who should succeed them in the duties of the Christian ministry.

CHAP. VII.

Sprinkling or pouring Water in Christian Baptism, most agreeable to scriptural Representations of the Ordinance and Allusions to it.

§. 1. BAPTISM seems to be most properly administered by sprinkling or pouring of water, as a token of those two grand blessings of the gospel covenant, our justification through the blood

of Christ, and our sanctification by the Holy Spirit.

1st. This ordinance is most properly administered by sprinkling, when considered as a token of our justification by the blood of Christ.

The sinner is frequently reminded in the New Testament of his obligations to the blood of Christ for his pardon and acceptance with God. "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,"* &c. "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood,"† &c. This is likewise represented in the sacred volume as a blessing of the gospel covenant. "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, &c. I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." We before acknowledged, that neither this, nor any blessing of the gospel covenant, is secured by baptism; yet reasons have been already given for representing it as a token of that covenant of Grace in which they are promised; as likewise for administering it by sprinkling, considered as a token of the application of Christ's blood for our justification. His blood is spoken of as a propitiatory sacrifice to procure the remission of sins,‡ and to restore the offender to God's forfeited favour. We well know that the blood of such sacrifices, under the law, was applied by sprinkling. "He shall sprinkle

* Eph. i. 7. † Rev. i. 5.
‡ Rom. iii. 25. Matt. xxvi. 28. Eph. ii. 13.

the blood of the sin offering,"† &c. "They shall kill the trespass offering, and the blood thereof shall he sprinkle round about the altar,‡ &c." And the writer to the Hebrews (chap. ix. and x.) speaks expressly of those sprinklings as typical of the blood of Christ, who, as our "great High Priest," hath, by that one offering, for ever perfected them that are sanctified. If the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, &c. purge your conscience from the dead works, to serve the living and the true God. Moses took the blood of calves, &c. but Christ hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. It was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away the guilt of sin, therefore he said, 'Lo I come to do thy will O God.' The blood which he shed at the offering up of his body once for all, is called "the blood of sprinkling."* And the apostle John says of it, as such, that it "cleanseth from all sin."‖ Now, if baptism be administered, as recommended by that apostle, § for the remission of sins, or as a token of that important blessing of the new covenant, to which, according to his representation, ¶ Christians are elected, through *sprinkling* of the blood of Jesus Christ, sprinkling is surely a mode of administering the ordinance most agreeable

† Lev. v. 9. ‡ Chap. vii. 2. 14. § Acts ii. 39.
* Heb. xii. 24. ‖ 1 John i. 7. ¶ 1 Pet. i. 2.

to those emblematical representations of its nature and design in the word of God. Moreover,

2dly, It is properly considered as a token of our sanctification by the Holy Spirit.

We need not cite particular passages, in which the Christian's sanctification is ascribed to the influences of the Holy Spirit; they are almost as numerous as the paragraphs in which that good work itself is mentioned in the word of God. And let it be remembered here that it is promised as a blessing of the new covenant, in connection with that which has been mentioned above. —"A new covenant will I make with the house of Israel,"¶ &c. "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and "I will be unto them a God, and they shall be unto me a people."* It is generally acknowledged, that baptism is at least an external token of this renewing of the Holy Ghost. But some say that sprinkling is no proper emblem of that spiritual purification which is signified in Christian baptism.—Whether proper or not, it was appointed by God as an emblem of the purification of his people in the Mosaic ritual.‡ "The priest shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and then shall pronounce him clean." It would be impertinent to object that this was a mere jewish ceremony; it is not produced as a precedent or pattern for the Christian's imitation,

¶ Jer. xxxi. 31—34.

* Heb. viii. 10. ‡ Lev. xiv. 7.

but merely as an instance in which God enjoined sprinkling for purification.—And if God commanded his ministers, in this and other cases, to sprinkle the offender and unclean, in token of their restoration to privileges forfeited by former impurities, let none dare to censure sprinkling as an improper emblem of purity. Professing Christians especially should beware of such rashness, because the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ repeatedly makes use of the term, when promising those influences of the Spirit which are signified in the ordinance of Baptism. The language of these promises is not, I will plunge you in clean water, and ye shall be clean, &c. but "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean."§ "My servant† (meaning the Messiah) shall sprinkle many nations.—I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, &c.—I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, &c." Luke, in his history of the acts of the apostles, describing the accomplishment of these promises, expresses himself thus:‡ "On the Gentiles (ἐπὶ τὰ ἔθνη) was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost."—And Paul makes use of the same word for the same blessing; he saves us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed (ἐξέχεε poured out) on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Now, if baptism be (as is very evident) a token of these in-

§ Ezek. xxxvi. 25. † Isa. lii. 15. ‡ Acts x. 45.

fluences of the Spirit, no mode so proper and expressive as sprinkling or pouring of water.

§. 2. It has often been said, that none are truly baptized but those who are plunged in water, and that it is wrong to call sprinkling baptizing. But those who assert this surely forget, or do not know, that the word of God expressly calls sprinklings baptisms, and speaks of persons and things as baptized that were not dipped but sprinkled. The author of the epistle to the converted Hebrews, reminding those Christians of the dispensation which they were formerly under, among other things observes, that it consisted of diverse washings, ‡ as we render it, but in the original it is (διαφοροις βαπτισμοις) diverse baptisms; and that they might know what rites he referred to in that expression, he afterwards particularly enumerates them (ver. 13.) "the sprinkling the unclean with the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of an heifer, to sanctify them for the purifying of the flesh." Moreover, says he, Moses took the blood of calves and of goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people."—And he adds, (ver. 21.) "he likewise sprinkled with blood, both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry." —These were what our apostle calls their diverse baptisms—But, on the principle abovementioned, he should not have used the word baptisms, unless the people, the book of the law, and the tab-

‡ Heb. ix. 10.

ernacle itself, had been dipped in blood or in water.——However, he has called them baptisms though they were only sprinkled, and therefore we not only may, but ought, to call sprinkling, or, in other words, we have here a certain proof that rantizing (as some learned in the Greek affect to call sprinkling) and baptizing are the same. For a remark on the word *diverse*, as here connected with baptisms, see chap. iii.

§. 3. The account given of the descent of the Holy Ghost in Acts ii. 3. affords another argument for baptizing by sprinkling.

Some are very fond of being baptized by immersion, because in that form only the whole body is washed with water.—How, say they, can it be said that a person is baptized with water, when only a little water has been sprinkled or poured upon his face? We may answer this question by proposing another, viz. How could the apostles be said to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, when that celestial fire rested only upon their heads? We have an account of that event in Acts ii. 3. "There appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and sat upon each of them."—John, the forerunner of Christ, foretelling that descent of the Spirit, says, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he that cometh after me, shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."† And if those were baptized with fire, upon whose

† Matt. iii. 11.

heads only the fire rested, those are equally baptized with water, who have water sprinkled or poured upon their faces. Examine the words of John in both senses. If you suppose him alluding to immersion, you explain them thus: "I baptize you unto repentance by plunging you into the water, so he that cometh after me shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost by pouring it, in the likeness of cloven tongues of fire, upon your heads."—But consider him as alluding to the custom of baptizing, by pouring water upon the head or face, his language is, "As I pour water upon you in my baptism, so shall Jesus, ere long, baptize you with the Holy Ghost, pouring it down upon you as in streams of fire." We need not ask which is the most natural construction of the words? But there is reason to ask, Why should any require the plunging of the whole body in baptism? Were that mode essential to a due administration of the ordinance, either Christ or his apostles, would certainly have insisted upon it.—They might have expressed it in terms so clear and strong, as that no honest enquirer could have doubted of their meaning. But this is very far from being the case. And as they have not required it, we cannot think any, since their day, have authority to decree rites and ceremonies in the Christian church. Would our brethren persuade us there is no way to heaven but that of going under the water? We must be

free to acknowledge, that we cannot think a person plunged in the Atlantic ocean would be a whit cleaner, either from the guilt or the filth of sin, in the sight of God, than another, on whose face only so much water has been poured, as may be held in the hollow of a man's hand. Paul teaches us, that circumcision avails nothing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature; and Peter declares, that baptism saves us not by putting away the filth of the flesh: a sentiment which that apostle probably learned from his Lord, when he said to him, "he that is washed," i. e. spiritually purified, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, "needeth not save to wash his feet."‡

To conclude, we refer it to every unprejudiced and candid enquirer after truth and duty to judge, on a serious attention to these few pages, whether our practice of baptizing by sprinkling or pouring of water be, as it is often represented, absurd and unscriptural; nay whether it be not our duty to adhere to it as most agreeable to what the word of God teaches us concerning the nature and design of the ordinance.

We shall offer our reasons for administering it to infants in the Second Part.

‡ If, as an ingenious writer supposes, Christ referred in these words to baptism, they are conclusive against the need of a total immersion.---See other thoughts upon the context in "An Inquiry into the nature and design of Baptism," p. 38.

PART II.

ON THE SUBJECT OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

CHAP. I.

The Children of professing Christians included in the Christian Covenant.

HAVING considered the proper mode of baptizing, we are now to inquire to whom the ordinance is to be administered. Though most, who insist upon the immersion of the whole body in baptism, refuse to administer it to children, we are at a loss to assign any good reason for so universal a connection of these two distinct tenets; and shall endeavour to prove that, whether Christians prefer sprinkling or dipping, they ought to give up their little ones to the Lord in this ordinance. As introductory to which design, we shall first examine the tenor of the Christian covenant.

§. 1. As the children of pious parents are exposed to sufferings and death, in common with the other descendants of the first Adam, it is reasonable to expect they should derive some pecu-

liar advantages from the second. They are evidently as feeble and helpless as others; equally liable to infirmities and afflictions, while they are continued in life; and multitudes of them lie down alike in the dust, almost as soon as they are born. We have reason to believe that their times, as well as those of their parents, are in the hands of the Lord, the judge of all the earth, who will do right. But these evils which they suffer cannot be considered as punishments of any actual transgressions of their own, when inflicted upon them before they are capable of knowing either good or evil. They seem, therefore, in such instances, to suffer as descendants from the first human pair; and while we acknowledge, with the apostle Paul,* that "through the offence of one many die who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression," may we not hope, with him, "that the grace of God, and his unspeakable gift of eternal life, shall, through Jesus Christ, abound unto many?" And that as the first man Adam was made to these a living soul, inasmuch as they derive from him a body endued with a principle of animal life, though subject to the power of death, that the last Adam will be to them a quickening Spirit?† We know not how to think, that the seed of his servants should be called into being merely to spend a few useless and miserable moments upon earth, and

* Rom. v. 14, 15. † 1 Cor. xv. 22, 45

then to be blotted out of existence, or consigned over to everlasting misery. The best of parents, indeed, are unable to communicate grace to their children; but they may recollect the promises with pleasure in which He has engaged to pour out his Spirit upon their seed, and his blessing upon their offspring. They have no merit to be imputed to their beloved babes, but it is their mercy to be informed of One that has freely given Himself for them; of One that is both able and willing to keep this dear important charge which, in the arms of faith and duty, they commit to Him against that day. And if we believe that children owe redemption to this Jesus, baptism is, in this view, properly administered to them as a token of that redemption which He has obtained for them by his precious blood. True, indeed, Jesus has forewarned his disciples that some of the children of the kingdom in that day shall be shut out; yet He did not speak it of such as should be removed in their infancy, but of those who live to renounce the Christian covenant, and despise both the requirements and the privileges of it. Perhaps there are instances of persons baptized, nay plunged, in adult years, and that upon a solemn profession of their Christian faith, who, after having been thus outwardly purified, return with the dog to his vomit, and the sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire. Now if the minister in these cases be not

chargeable with the guilt of prostituting the ordinance, much less when he applies it to the infant offspring of the people of God. In this case we know there can be no actual defilement. But in the other we are certain there must have been; and, considering the temptations to hypocrisy and party-attachments in such a day and country as ours, those should be very cautious of baptizing the adult who think the ordinance should be administered to none but true believers. All are not Israel that are of Israel; nor are all real Christians who express a zeal for some peculiar ceremonies as institutions of the gospel. That gospel says much to caution men against such a confidence. Nor does it by any means encourage the decendants of good men to trust to the religion of their parents in such a manner as to neglect it themselves. "Think not" (said John to the Pharisees) "to say within yourselves we have Abraham to our father." The apostle Paul declared freely of himself and his Christian brethren, that "they had no confidence in the flesh." But neither Paul nor John would teach the offspring of pious ancestors to despise a godly parentage. The former expressly asserts of the circumcised Jew, that he had, as such, greatly the advantage of the uncircumcised Gentile every way.* It is said, indeed, that children may enjoy those advantages, and even privileges of the

* Rom. iii. 2.

gospel covenant, though this external token of that covenant be not applied to them. Upon the same principle others may hope to be saved in the neglect of all the institutions of Christ: a sentiment, which we shall leave to those to enjoy and vindicate, who advance it. If we desire the blessing for our children or ourselves, it concerns us to be found walking in all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And considering the evils and dangers to which they are exposed, as soon as they come into the world, we cannot too soon or too solemnly commit the dear important charge into his hands who has encouraged us to hope He will be a God to us and to our seed. If any doubt his readiness to accept the dedication we make of our little ones to Him in this ordinance, we shall urge, as a consideration to encourage their hope,

§. 2. The great condescension and tenderness towards little children in general, and the offspring of the people of God in particular, that have been expressed and manifested by God the Father, and by our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom we dedicate them in Christian baptism.

The great Father of all has, in a variety of ways, made the most suitable and abundant provision for the support of infants, and is continually exercising a watchful providence over them in that tender and helpless season. And can we suppose that He bestows all his care on their bodies, and is utterly unmindful of their spiritual

and eternal interests? Jesus taught his disciples to draw an argument for the support of their faith and hope in Him from the provision made by God for the whole animal and vegetable creation: "Consider the lilies how they grow:" "Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your heavenly Father." We may, with some propriety, say that of our children which He said of his disciples in that connection; "they are (surely one of them is) "of more value than many sparrows." If, therefore, they fall early to the ground, and are snatched away from the embraces of their affectionate parents almost as soon as they begin to rejoice over them, is it not by the appointment of their Father and our Father, their God and our God? And if He suffer them in this world to be nipped in the bud, before it be fully opened, may we not hope, that it is with a gracious design of transplanting them to a more friendly climate, where they may unfold all their beauties, and flourish in immortal lustre under the benign influences of the Sun of righteousness? "Children, says the Psalmist,* are an heritage of the Lord." He gives them as such to the church, and to their parents; and, through the riches of his grace in Christ Jesus, mercifully considers them as an heritage to Himself. His word furnishes many convincing testimonies of this truth. When Jonah was sent to Nineveh, with a message of terror, and that holy man,

* Ps. cxxvii. 3.

from some mistaken notions of God and his own credit, was eager to see the threatening fulfilled in the utter desolation of that populous city, hear the tender expostulations of a gracious God with his erring servant: "Shall I not spare Nineveh that great city, wherein are more than threescore thousand persons that cannot distinguish between their right hand and their left?" But He has expressed and manifested a peculiar regard for the children of his own people. Because He loved their fathers, says Moses,* therefore He chose their seed after them. His mercies to the seed of Abraham were at once a pleasing illustration of the truth, and of the words of the apostle Paul,† "beloved for the fathers sake." That was said of the Israelites who inherited the blessing of the God of their fathers, as being the seed of Abraham his servant, and the children of Jacob his chosen. And with pleasure we observe the children of the righteous included by God in many covenant-engagements which He entered into with their parents. At a time of general wickedness,‡ "Noah found grace in the sight of the Lord;" and that grace or favour is expressed by God towards him in the following words: "Come thou, and ALL THINE HOUSE, into the ark; for thee have I found righteous before me in this generation. And the Lord blessed Noah and HIS SONS; and God spake to Noah and his sons, saying, I will establish my covenant with

* Deut. iv. 37. † Rom. xi. 28. ‡ Gen. vii.

you, and with YOUR SEED after you." The prophet Nathan was sent by God with a similar message to his servant David :* "I will set up thy seed after thee, and establish his kingdom." And when, on Solomon's displeasing the Lord, He threatened to take away the kingdom, "Nevertheless, says He, in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake; but I will rend it out of the hands of thy son: nevertheless I will not rend all the kingdom, but will give one tribe to thy son for my servant David's sake." On principles like these the royal psalmist founded that declaration,† "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, his seed shall be mighty upon earth, the generation of the upright shall be blessed." Nor were the blessings they inherited as such merely natural and temporary. The Father of mercies engaged to "pour out his Spirit upon the seed of his servants;"‡ "their children, says he,‖ shall be as aforetime; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." Encouraged by such declarations of mercy, we find the pious patriarchs, not only committing their offspring to God by faith in prayer, but, likewise, solemnly blessing them in the name of the Lord. And it is worth notice, that their seed, thus included in the promises made to their fathers, and by them solemnly devoted to the Most High, are expressly claimed by Him as his own; yea, those in Israel who

* 2 Sam. vii. 12. † Ps. cxii. 1, 2. ‡ Is. xliv. 3.
‖ Jer. xxx. 20, 22.

led their children to the temples of idols are charged with the guilt of alienating the Lord's propriety.¶ "Thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast BORNE UNTO ME, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured; Is this thy whoredom a small matter, that thou hast slain MY children?" Thanks be to God that He condescends to call the children of his people HIS children. Let us not dare to keep back from Him that which is his own. A feeble infant may, indeed, seem to some an offering unworthy of his acceptance, and below his notice; but his thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor are his ways as our ways. The tender pious parent has, on this account, reason to rejoice that they are not. And it is our great mercy, as Christians, that our exalted Lord and Head is in this, as in other respects, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; the good Shepherd, ever ready to gather the lambs into his arms, and carry them in his bosom. He gave repeatedly the most convincing testimonies of this truth: as when He sat a little child before his disciples, and laid that solemn injunction upon them,* Whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth Me. By receiving them in his name, He gives us to understand, He meant receiving them as belonging to Him;† or receiving them as disciples tru-

¶ Ezek. xvi. 20, 21.

* Matth. xviii. 5, 6. † Mark ix. 41.

ly dear to Him; insomuch that whoso shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me, says He, it were better for him that a mill stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Thus strongly did He express his affection towards them; and He manifested it in a no less significant and encouraging manner, when He took little children from their parents' arms into his own, and then, with a Godlike authority and benevolence, pronounced his blessing upon them. That was, indeed, such an instance of the Redeemer's condescension and good will to little children as deserves a more particular examination in our present enquiry.—It is recorded by three of the evangelists.* "They brought (or there were brought) unto Him (Jesus) little, or young, children, infants, that He would put his hands on them and pray; and his disciples, when they saw it, rebuked those that brought them: but Jesus called them unto Him, and was much displeased (with his disciples,) and said unto them, Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God, or of heaven; and He took them up into his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them." It is observable, that the children brought to Jesus are called, by Matthew and Mark, (παιδια, a word which is a diminutive from παις; and properly signifies) little children; by Luke (βρεφη) infants.

* Matth. xix. 13—15. Mark x. 13—16. Luke xviii. 15—17.

Both words are applied to the infant Jesus when lying in the manger.* Nay the latter is used (Luke i. 41.) for a babe in the womb: and Zacharias applied the former to John soon after he was born. The terms, therefore, by which they were spoken of, testify that they were young children, infants: and that, indeed, might be inferred, if not from its being said they were *brought* to Jesus, yet at least from his taking them into his arms. Their affectionate parents, probably hearing of the condescension and tenderness of Jesus, as well as of his divine power, brought them to Him for his blessing. The disciples, from some mistaken notions of their Lord and his kingdom, would have kept them at a distance: perhaps thinking that such little children were incapable of receiving any benefit from Him; and looking upon it as inconsistent with his dignity to take notice of them. But it is said, when Jesus saw this act of his disciples, and the unbecoming spirit they discovered in it, he was much displeased; moved with grief and indignation. He, on other occasions, rebuked his disciples; but seldom, if ever, disapproved of their conduct to such a degree as when they would have kept little children at a distance from Him. The same word is used* to express the disgust which the ten disciples felt when they heard the request of-

* Matth. ii. 11. Luke ii. 12. Luke i. 70.
† Matt. xx. 24.

fered by Zebedee's wife for her two sons, and there it is translated "moved with indignation." That evangelist represents the wrath of the chief priests and scribes, on hearing the children's hosannas addressed to our Saviour, by saying they were sore displeased. And Luke uses the same word to express the indignation with which the ruler of the synagogue was moved when he heard that Jesus healed on the sabbath-day.† Let all his followers, his ministers especially, take heed that they do not incur the displeasure of their Lord by doing or saying any thing to discourage tender parents from bringing their little children to him. Let us hear his instruction and charge concerning them: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." Some, perhaps, would be offended at the expression, if Jesus had not made use of it Himself. Little children come to Christ! how can such come to Him? Acceptably, no doubt, or He would not have encouraged their approach; would not have enjoined it, as He does, upon his disciples, that they should by no means keep them at a distance; but rather permit and encourage them to come to Him, who, as a mighty and merciful Redeemer, stands with open arms to embrace them. The mention of that leads us to take notice of the reason He urges for suffering little children to come unto Him, *viz.* of such is the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of heaven. By these phrases all understand

† Luke xiii. 14.

the church of Christ, either in this or a future state. And it matters little, in the present enquiry, which was principally intended here; a state of grace and glory being so connected, that a title to the latter presupposeth an interest in the former. Compare these words of our Lord with what He says to Nicodemus.* In them He solemnly declares, that except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God; here He says, concerning little children, that of such is the kingdom of God. It must, therefore, follow, that little children are capable of being born of water and the Spirit, and consequently that they are the proper subjects of baptism, as the appointed sign of that divine operation. It is, indeed, objected, that our Lord says only (τοιουτων) of such is the kingdom of heaven. But what more or what else should any one have expected Him to say? If, instead of (τοιουτων) such, He had said (τουτων) these, He had confined his assertion, and limited the kingdom to those few children that were then before Him. But now He speaks of little ones, like them, in all nations and ages. No, say some, He means grown-up persons, like children. Indeed! This, however, supposes that there is somewhat pleasing to Christ in children, and if such grown-up persons as are like children are the proper subjects of his kingdom, certainly children themselves, to whom they are like. We

* John iii. 5.

acknowledge that He did take occasion from thence to recommend a humble, meek, and condescending spirit to his disciples. And it was a word in season. They needed the lesson when they could reject these little ones. But if that was all He intended by ordering them to be brought to Him, He might (as one observes) have set sheep or doves before them with as much propriety as little children. Yet we cannot suppose He would have laid his hands upon them and blessed them, and have said concerning them, "of such is the kingdom of heaven." Let us observe the force of his argument upon this interpretation. "Suffer little children to come unto me, because of men and women, that are like children, is the kingdom of heaven." Surely none, who have the least regard for their Lord's honour, can suppose Him capable of such reasoning as that. Why, indeed, should He be displeased with his disciples for forbidding little children to come to Him, and lay it down as a standing rule in his church that they should be suffered to come unto Him, unless little children were admitted by Him to the honours and privileges of his kingdom? To convince all, then around Him, and his followers in every age, that He would receive them as such, He called them to Him, and taking them into his embraces, He laid his hands upon them and blessed them.

The followers and even the ministers of Christ were usually set apart in this manner to the Lord,

and thus the influences of the Holy Spirit (signified in baptism) were communicated.* Therefore Jesus makes use of this solemn form over little children, of laying his hands upon them, when consecrating them to Himself. And He was so far from approving of the sentiments of such who imagine these little ones utterly incapable of the blessings of his kingdom, that He says expressly, "whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, (that is, as a little child receives it) shall in no wise enter therein."†

If it be asked, "why did not Jesus baptize them?" that may easily be accounted for many ways.—Possibly their parents had not yet entered themselves among the followers of Christ—or, if they had, their children might have been baptized before. But it is a sufficient answer to the question, that (as we are informed John iv. 2.) Jesus baptized not, but his disciples. Thus much cannot be denied, that, by this authoritative, affectionate, and publick testimony of his gracious regards for young children, the great Head of the church warned his disciples of the guilt of despising little children, and enjoins it upon them that they be presented to Him as the proper subjects of his kingdom: and this is all we wish to prove from the passage.

* Acts vi. 6. viii. 19. 2 Tim. i. 6.
† Luke xxviii. 17.

To sum up then what we think may be urged upon this subject,—considering the evils to which the children of God's people are exposed in common with the other descendants of the first Adam, it appears reasonable to expect that they should derive some peculiar advantages from the second; viz. Our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not only probable that He would shew peculiar favour to such, but some passages have been produced out of the Old and New Testament in which He has expressed and manifested the tenderest affection for them, and others in which He has recommended them to his disciples, as the beloved lambs of his flock, and subjects of his kingdom. He claims them as his own, and his apostles speak of them as holy on account of their being devoted to Him, or having a right to the distinguishing token of the covenant of grace.

Again, the promises to Abraham in the Old Testament, and those to Christians in the New, appear to engage for the same spiritual, temporal and eternal blessings.—They are made alike to believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, and to their children, in both Testaments.—And not only Abraham, but all his chosen seed were admitted to the peculiar privileges of the covenant in the same way in which Christians are taught to expect them. And if the covenant made by God with his people now is the same that He entered into with Abraham, as his infant offspring were

admitted to an external token of it, so may theirs. Indeed, as that covenant, far from being repealed, is illustrated and confirmed by Christ, nothing can authorize or even excuse Christians in forbidding little children thus to come unto Him, but the express order of Christ their Lord and ours, and we have his order to forbid them not.

From these several considerations it appears to us indisputably certain, that the infant offspring of Christians are included in the covenant of God with their parents.

Their right to Baptism, as a token of this covenant, we shall endeavour to prove in the following chapter.

CHAP. II.

Reasons for administering Baptism, as a Seal of the Christian Covenant, to the Children of professing Christians.

§. 1. AS God commanded that the infant offspring of his people should be circumcised in token of that his covenant, the tenor of which was explained in the former chapter; we cannot but think that Baptism, as the Christian circumcision, may and ought to be administered, in the same view, to the children of Christians.

The several considerations urged in the former chapter are intended to encourage Christians, whom God, through Jesus Christ, has graciously

admitted into covenant with himself, to hope that He, who is their God, will also be a God to their seed after them. Having that hope, we shall now endeavour to convince them not only that Baptism, as the external token of that covenant, may be applied to them, but likewise that they ought by all means to embrace the earliest opportunity of giving them up, in that ordinance, to the Lord their God.

We know that some have affected to treat all arguments for infant Baptism as absurd, that are taken from the practice of the church before the time of our Saviour. But we hope to make it appear, that the ordinance of circumcision, when considered in its proper light, affords one good reason for baptizing the children of God's covenant people in all ages. For this purpose, we shall beg the reader's attention to the following remarks, intended to illustrate and confirm the general position at the beginning of this section. Circumcision was instituted by God as a token of his covenant with Abraham :* "Ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you." Hence Peter calls it,† "The covenant," speaking (by a common figure) of the sign in a term used for the thing signified. So God himself, "My covenant shall be in your flesh,"‡ referring to circumcision, that, in a former verse, he calls a token of the covenant.

* Gen. xvii. 11. † Acts vii. 8. ‡ Gen. xvii. 13.

This covenant, we believe, was nothing less than the first edition of the covenant of grace, that is published more fully in the New Testament. The apostle Paul evidently considered it as such, when he called the external token of it; viz. Circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith. As a covenant of grace, we found that it admits Gentile proselytes or converts to equal privileges with those that were of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh. An early intimation of this extensive mercy was given in the circumcision of Ishmael ;¶ and in a part of the Mosaic dispensation hinted at above. And, indeed, had circumcision been (as some said it was) merely the seal or token of a temporal covenant that engaged for the inheritance of the land of Canaan, it would, as we hinted above, have ceased, when the Israelites were put into possession of that country,—as the promise, in the faith of which it was intended to confirm them, was, upon this supposition, then fulfilled to them in all its extent; from hence therefore it is evident, that circumcision was a token of the covenant of grace.

Farther, circumcision, as the external token of this covenant, was expressly ordered by God himself to be applied to infants.§ "He that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you." Let none, therefore, who profess a reverence of the divine authority, dare to call it an absurdity,

¶ Gen. xvii. 25, 26. § Gen. xvii. 12.

or to censure it as, in any view, weak or improper, to apply a token of the covenant of grace to little children. Abraham, the father and pattern of believers, applied circumcision, as such, to his children: thus likewise did all the thousands of his descendants give up their infant offspring to the Lord. And they did it in obedience to a divine command. Did they do wrong in applying a token of the covenant to young children? Nay, would they not have been highly criminal in neglecting it? That rite is now exchanged for one less painful, but equally significant and sacred; we would not therefore justifiy ourselves in withholding it from our children.

It has indeed been often said, that we cannot argue from circumcision to baptism, as we are not "to go to Old Testament rites to learn New Testament duties." But to what purpose is the remark here? We acknowledge, that the ceremonies of the Mosaic ritual are abolished. We are not pleading for the continuance of circumcision in the church; though it should be remembered, that circumcision was only adopted by Moses, and interwoven with his constitution, and was not originally instituted as a part of it. God enjoined it, and his people practised it ages before the establishment of the Jewish theocracy. The abolishing of that, therefore, cannot prove the dissolution of that more ancient covenant of God with Abraham and his seed, of which circumcision was the appointed seal. But why ob-

ject against learning from an Old testament rite? Were not both Testaments written under the same divine inspiration? are not both closely connected in authority and design? Yes, undermine the one, and the other will fall. Our Lord and his apostles expressed a high veneration for the writings of Moses and the prophets, and recommended them to the esteem of all Christians. They allude to them frequently; often quote passages from them; speak of many things which they said and did themselves, as said and done to fulfil those ancient types and prophecies, and to carry on their great design. Nay, Christ speaks of his coming to fulfil them. Christians are not to practise Jewish ceremonies, but are they, therefore, to despise them as having no longer any end or meaning? It ill becomes those to decry Old Testament rites, &c. who can find typical mysteries in all the several materials, forms, and utensils of the ancient tabernacle; and most momentous gospel doctrines, not only in the Jewish high-priest himself, but in every hue and form and fold of his garments. Men may indulge their fancies in tracing resemblances between Old Testament rites and New Testament doctrines, where none were intended: Yet it is very certain, that many of the institutions of the former were typical of the latter. The New Testament speaks of them as such. The Lord's supper was prefigured in the passover; and why not Baptism in circum-

cision? These two are the only positive institutions of Christianity; and it is as reasonable to expect a type of both, as of one, in the Old Testament; and, indeed, that if one was, both should be typified there. But we know of no ancient rite by which Baptism was prefigured, if not by circumcision. Nor need we look for any other; there is, in some respects, a striking resemblance between the two institutions. Both ordinances were first administered to the heads of houses, and then to their households. Compare Gen. xvii. 10—13. with Acts xvi. 13—33.

Christian Baptism appears, from the New Testament, and circumcision from the Old, to have been administered to believers and their seed, whether Jews or Gentiles.* Neither ordinance was to be administered twice to the same person. Both were tokens of spiritual and moral purity. Compare Deut. x. 15, 16. xxx. 6. Acts ii. 28, 29. with Rom. vi. 4—6. Col. ii. 11, 12. Hence the baptised Christian, like the circumcised Jew, was taught to look upon himself as separated from the world to be holy to the Lord, as well as to enjoy the privileges of his people.†

There is, therefore, great reason to believe, that the Head of the church intended that circumcision should be succeeded by baptism, as well as the passover by his holy supper. And as Paul calls one the Christian passover, so may we the

* See Gen. xvii. 12. and Gal. iii. 27, 28. † Rom. iii. 1, 2. vi. 3.

other, with propriety, the Christian circumcision. Indeed, the apostle Paul seems to call it so himself,* "In whom," meaning Christ, i. e. by his order in the gospel, and as his disciples, "ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands;" wherein is signified to you, in a lively figure, your putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by that sacred rite, which may, in this view, be called the circumcision of Christ, as being that ordinance which he has substituted in the stead of that ancient ceremony. And thus ye are buried with him unto sin, a rite by which is also signified to you the obligation which you are under to approve yourselves risen with him, through that faith which is of the operation of God who raised him from the dead.

The argument for infant baptism from circumcision, stands thus:—The covenant made with Abraham was a covenant of grace, and as such comprehended both Jews and Gentiles, and their seed. Circumcision was instituted by God as a token of that covenant. As such, he commanded that it should be administered to the infant offspring of his covenant people. Though the covenant endureth, that ancient token of it is abolished; nor is there any external sign or seal of it, under the Christian dispensation, except baptism. There is reason to think, this ordinance was intended to succeed circumcision, as it resembles it in many respects, and seems to be call-

* Col. ii. 11, 12.

ed the circumcision of Christ by the apostle Paul. And forasmuch as circumcision was administered to infants in token of this covenant; baptism being its substitute and antitype, ought to be administered to infants likewise. Little more need be said to prove their right to the ordinance as a seal or token of the covenant. It is established on a divine appointment. An act of God in their favour, never repeated by him or by any under his authority. Let a single text be produced clearly and expressly repealing it, and we will give up their title. But for the reader's farther satisfaction, we shall mention several passages that confirm and perpetuate it.

§. 2. We shall now examine the purport and extent of our Lord's commission to his ministers.† "Go ye therefore, and (μαθητευσατε παντα τα εθνη βαπτιζοντες αυτους) disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world."

That they and all men might know the authority upon which He spake; He assured them, in the preceding words,* That "all power both in heaven and on earth was given unto him;" that He was the supreme Sovereign of the kingdoms of grace and glory. And then, as such, he proceeds to issue out his royal edict to his ministers

* Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. Ver. 18.

for enrolling all his subjects. This He ordered them to do in baptism. And that they might at once consider the ordinance in its true light, and administer it to all for whom it was intended, He commands them thereby to disciple all nations. "Disciple all nations, baptizing them;" that is, enter them among my disciples, in or by baptism. "Moses' disciples," was a term familiar to them. The descendants of Abraham were entered among his disciples by circumcision. But now Jesus lays aside that rite, and, by virtue of his authority as Lord and Head of the church, institutes, or, at least, adopts another. The apostles well knew that Moses' disciples were initiated by circumcision in their infancy: and from such an expression as this of their divine Master, they might justly conclude, that He intended infants should be discipled to him in baptism, as they had been before by circumcision to Moses. Some may think it improper to call children disciples; but there seems no more impropriety in calling them disciples of Christ, than servants of God, as in Lev. xxv. 41, 42. And they seem at least included, if not principally referred to, in the term in Acts xv. 10. where the design of the judaizing teachers, which is mentioned Acts xxi. 21. as a scheme for circumcising their children, is censured as an attempt to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples.—But we are often told, that Christ could not intend to authorize his ministers herein to baptize children, because he commands

them to teach first, and then baptize. In answer to which it has been observed, that if we are always to lay so much on the order in which things are mentioned, we must believe, on the other hand, that John baptized before he preached, as his preaching is mentioned after his baptizing.† But the objection is, in every view, indefensible and ill-gounded. It is a mere English criticism, that owes all its apparent force to the phraseology made use of in our translation. For, in the first place, the word at the beginning of this passage (μαθητευσατε) does not so properly signify to teach, as to proselyte or make disciples. And farther, the duty recommended in it, whatever it be, is nothing distinct from baptism, much less previous to it; they are not required to disciple and baptize, but *by* or *in* baptizing; or, in other words, they are to set apart the disciples of Christ in all nations, by administering water to them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This is all enjoined in the former part of these instructions, in which there is not, therefore, the least hint of any previous qualifications for the ordinance. But if any regard is to be paid to the order in which the words are placed, teaching is to follow baptism—for after enjoining that, our Lord adds, "teaching them." Διδασκοντες, the word used here, properly signifies teaching or instructing; which all need, and more especially children. And may his ministers always re-

† Mark i. 4.

member, that they are here required to "teach his people to observe all things whatsoever he has commanded them." One of the things which he commanded was, "Permit little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." No doubt but his apostles, after what they had suffered from his displeasure for keeping infants at a distance from him, would be willing enough, on the authority of such an injunction as this, to enter them among his disciples; and devote them with a pious pleasure to the care and blessing of that good Shepherd of the sheep, of whose readiness to take the lambs into his arms, they had lately had so convincing and encouraging a demonstration. "No, by no means, (say some) for children are not mentioned in the command."

But will any urge that as a sufficient cause for refusing to baptize them? then let them refuse to baptize women, for they are not mentioned; and men likewise, for neither are they mentioned; nay, they have no authority from hence to baptize believers, for they are not mentioned: And we must beg leave to observe here by the way, that we do not remember one express command, either of Christ or his apostles, to baptize believers in all the New Testament; and are very certain, that there is no command to confine the ordinance to believers only.

But to return to this of Christ now before us. The truth is, no sex, no age is particularly spe-

cified here; but a term is made use of, that includes both sexes, and every age, from an infant of a day to the hoary head.

"All nations," whether Jew or Gentile: that was undoubtedly part of the intention; and it confirms what was before observed concerning the nature of the Christian covenant. In that the apostles were fully instructed, soon after they received these orders. And as that included their children with their parents, they must consider this as a sufficient authority for applying the external token of that covenant to them. Nor can any justly exclude them, after Christ has commanded his ministers to baptize all nations. Do children make parts, very considerable parts of all nations? Does not the expression elsewhere, in the word of God, include children? as when it is said,‖ "In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." And if the command of Christ here had been to circumcise all nations, every one would have thought children included. The apostles would then undoubtedly have circumcised children, though they are not expressly mentioned. And why not baptize them upon the like principles? viz. because they had always been admitted to the external seal of the covenant with their parents. Indeed, as that had ever been their privilege, there was no occasion expressly to mention them, if the privilege of admission was to be continued to them. But it seems to have been absolutely necessary to have inserted

‖ Gen. xxii. 18.

an exclusive clause, if Jesus had not intended "that the children of his people should be admitted as aforetime," since otherwise the apostles would admit them of course. And would not they, should not we, have been shocked at such a clause as that? "Children have ever hitherto been admitted, with their parents, to a seal of the covenant; but no seal of it shall be administered to them now any longer. The seed of Abraham inherited the blessing of the God of their fathers, but the children of Christians shall be shut out. Baptize believers, but not their offspring; children are not to be numbered among the subjects of my kingdom." What discouraging, what offensive words would these have been? how unlike the condescending, compassionate Jesus! Totally inconsistent with the very constitution of that covenant of grace of which he is the merciful Mediator; and no less so with the honour of his name, and prosperity of his cause. Blessed be God that we find no sentiments like these expressed or intimated here, or in any part of his word; but much far otherwise: much to encourage us to bring our dear little ones, in the arms of love and duty, to present them to Jesus in this holy ordinance: A great deal in many other passages, and not a little in this. "Indeed, says a serious writer, it is not the manner of a gracious and holy God to dispossess his church and people of a privilege freely vouchsafed to them, without signifying such a repeal, and substituting some equal or greater privilege in the room of

it." Let such, as seek a precept for baptizing children, study well these instructions of their divine Master, and they will find it here: A precept as express for baptizing infants as for baptizing the adult; and, on the authority of which the ordinance is to be administered to both, (i. e. if the latter have never been baptized before) or administered to neither.

§. 3. Those words of the apostle Peter* express his sense both of the nature and extent of the Christian covenant, and of the proper subjects of baptism, in which he said to such as, being pierced to the heart, came to enquire of him and his brethren what they should do; "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

Herein he plainly recommends baptism from this consideration, "the promise is to you and your children." It may, therefore, be proper to inquire, in the first place, to what promise He refers. Some say to the prophecy of Joel, quoted in a former part of this chapter; others rather think he meant the grand promise of the gospel covenant. The prophecy of Joel, quoted in this context, is Joel ii. 28, 29. "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall pro-

* Acts ii. 38, 39.

phecy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants, and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit." This our apostle cites ver. 17—21. with the following additional clauses (as in ver. 30—32.) "And I will show wonders in the heavens, and in the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke; the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Consider this as a prophecy of supernatural gifts and appearances, and, we apprehend, Peter could not say concerning it, when addressing himself to those Jewish and Gentile converts, this promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, &c. Probably some then present were never endowed with miraculous powers; and it is very certain, that many thousands of their descendants never were; and, indeed, if they had been continued to all the called of God, they would no longer have been extraordinary. But the apostle said enough himself to convince every unprejudiced mind that he never meant to encourage such an expectation. He told those who were about him very expressly, that *that* prophecy, as far as it engaged for miraculous gifts, had been already fulfilled in what they had seen and heard, that day, of the Spirit's operations. Fulfilled to whom? not to them; but in and upon

the apostles. Referring to the different tongues, with which the apostles spake, under a supernatural inspiration of suggestion, he says, "This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel." And after assuring his hearers that it had been fulfilled to him and the rest of the apostles, he would not refer to the same, when saying to them again, The promise is to you and to your children. Nor is it to be thought, that Peter would urge a promise of supernatural gifts as a motive to repentance and baptism. He could not assure all that repented and were baptized of such gifts, and some might and did possess them, who were never baptized at all.

From these and other arguments, that might be advanced, it appears, that our apostle speaks here, not of Joel's prophecy and miraculous gifts, but of the grand promise of the gospel covenant. And to whom does he say this promise belongs? His words, directed to his hearers were, "The promise is unto you and to your children." So the blessed God said, ages before, to Abraham, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee." But some are not willing to believe that little children are intended. No, all the apostle meant, they tell us, is, "Your descendants shall inherit the promised blessing when they are called by divine grace." If this was all, it was very little indeed. It was no intimation of mercy at all concerning their children as theirs. He might have said this of the children of unconverted hea-

thens, as well as of the offspring of Christians. If your children, when grown up, become Christians, they shall enjoy the privileges of the Christian covenant; but the apostle joins them here with their parents, as admitted in consequence of their relation to them, into covenant with God, and proper subjects of baptism, as the seal of that covenant. "And" (to adopt the words of Mr. Bostwick in his sensible discourse on this passage) "this is the only sense which the construction of the words will bear. For the apostle does not say, the promise is now to you, and shall be to your children when grown up, but the promise is to you and your children; by which he very plainly intends to express the present privileges of the children of those Jewish converts above those of unconverted Gentiles." We will observe the connection in which he introduces the important truth; and examine what duties he recommends by this weighty consideration. "Repent and be baptized, for the promise is unto you, and to your children. This exhortation, (adds the above writer) "plainly consists of two branches, each of which is urged by a distinct motive. The first is repentance, or a turning to God through Christ; this is urged with the encouraging motive, that they shall receive the forgiveness of sins, and the ordinary sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost. The second branch of the exhortation is a submission to this new dispensation of the gospel covenant, by being

baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus : this is urged with the assurance of the promise being to them and to their children, &c. As if it had been said, The promise which encourages you to enter into this new covenant by baptism is primarily to you and your children, as the descendants of Abraham, and secondarily to as many of the Gentiles, who are yet afar off, including their children also, as by the ministry of the word the Lord our God shall call." It is plain then, (continues this author) that this promise is urged as a reason why they ought to submit to this institution of the gospel, and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. This reason then must hold good with respect to all to whom the promise is made, (and, we may also say, this duty must belong to them all,) " but the promise is made equally to them and their children ; it is therefore an equal reason why they and their children should be baptized : that is to say, if the promise being made to them was any reason why they ought to he baptized, as the apostle expressly declares, then the same promise extending to their children must he an equal reason for administering baptism to them. The sum of the argument is plainly this : The promise is to you, therefore be baptized ; and the promise is to your children also, therefore let them be baptized likewise. Indeed, to suppose their children excluded from baptism, must render the apostle's argument very confused and inconclusive : For then it must stand

thus ; The promise is to you, therefore be ye baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus ; the promise is equally to your children, yet let not your children be baptized, for they are not the proper subjects of such an ordinance—but what an absurdity is this !" An absurdity indeed, in the manner of reasoning, and likewise in the supposition, that their children were included in the promise, and might not be admitted to this external token of it. And the supposition would appear as shocking to them as it would be absurd in itself. Those of the apostle's hearers, who were Jews, knew the tenor of the Abrahamic covenant, and rejoiced in the privileges they derived from it, as the seed of Abraham ; their children were according to that ancient institution, in covenant with God before their conversion to Christianity. Were they now given to understand that, upon embracing Christ and the gospel, their children would be excluded ? Peter had been persuading them to receive Jesus as the Lord's anointed, and to enter themselves among his disciples, by being baptized in his name ; but from such an insinuation as this, they would entertain a very unfavourable opinion of the Christian dispensation. However, the apostle's words had a very different meaning. That they might be prevailed upon to submit to this new ritual, he assured them, that their children were continued in possession of their ancient privilege. For it is observable, (as the late mentioned writer remarks) that he "does not say the promise *was* to you and your children, but *is still*, otherwise they might naturally be supposed to object, that their

children were like to be in a worse condition under the gospel than under the law. But the apostle precludes any such objection, by informing them, that they should lose nothing by submitting to this new dispensation of the covenant; nay, that the privileges of the gospel, instead of being thus more confined, should be more enlarged than under the law: for, under the law, the promise was only to them and their children, as descendants of Abraham, but now it shall extend to all among the Gentiles, together with children, whom the Lord shall call." The Gentiles were often spoken of as those that were afar off. Paul makes use of the expression with reference to them, Ephes. ii. 12, 13, &c. "Ye, who were in times past Gentiles in the flesh, were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, &c. but now in Christ Jesus, ye, who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." And these words of Peter contain one among many other intimations of that mercy, which was in store for them. They shall be called, and the promise shall go along with the calls of the gospel. It was not to be confined to those who were then under the preaching of it. All, in every age and nation, who cordially receive it, shall inherit the blessing, be baptized themselves, and bring their children also to the ordinance, as a token and seal of it. Let us thankfully embrace the privilege, and, when presenting our dear little ones to the Lord in that ordinance, plead this exhortation and encouragement of his holy apostle. Be it unto us and ours

according to that gracious word, on which thou hast caused thy servants to hope.

CHAP. III.

Objections to Infant Baptism considered.

§. 1. THAT neither the commission of Christ, nor these words of Peter may be understood as extending to little children, we are often reminded, "That this apostle and his brethren, and John before them, required repentance and faith of those they baptized:" And as infants can neither repent nor believe, therefore, says the Antipædo-baptist, they are not the proper subjects for this ordinance. This is urged by many as an unanswerable objection against infant baptism. But let the cases referred to be thoroughly and impartially examined, and they will appear nothing to the purposes for which they are usually produced.

The apostles required profession of their faith of such as came to be baptized: True; but who were they? not the offspring of Christian parents; and certainly the case of adult converts from heathenism or the Jewish law is very different from that of the children of such as are already Christians: So that no conclusion can be fairly drawn from the one to the other. Let an instance be produced, in which the apostles refused to baptize the child of a Christian upon this consideration, and we will acknowledge it a case in point. But that these instances, in which they required faith and repentance, afford no solid ob-

jection against our practice of baptizing the children of baptized parents, will, we doubt not, appear to every one who seriously and candidly attends to the following observations.

It appears undoubtedly from hence, that the apostles baptized persons in adult years. And they must baptize such, if any, at the first establishment of Christianity. But are we therefore to conclude, that they did not afterwards baptize their children? The adults were circumcised; therefore, on a parity of reason, children were not circumcised. The conclusion might be drawn from the premises as justly in the one case, as in the other.

As to the prerequisites for the ordinance, it is acknowledged, that the covenant, of which Baptism is the sign, is a covenant of grace: the blessings of it are, therefore, bestowed freely, and may certainly be so bestowed upon children, as well as others. All laws and customs allow, that favours may be granted to children by legacy or deed of gift, when they know it not. What is a more common term than this, "I give this estate to such a one, and his heirs?" So the great God (si magna cum parvis componere liceat) in his grant to his people, "I will be a God to you and to your seed." The former is valid, tho' the child be not of age capable of knowing, and accepting it when granted, why not the latter?

Let us here recollect a little of what the word of God says concerning children; the divine impressions of which it supposes them capable, and the spiritual privileges promised them therein. "The seed of the righteous, it is said,¶ are blessed." They are

called God's servants.‖ They are commanded to appear before God in the solemn assembly in Zion, even the children that suck the breast.§ "A child at the breast is represented as hoping in God, and cast upon him from the womb."* Jesus speaks of a little child as believing in him :† and expressly cautions his disciples against despising such little ones (ver. 10.) as being honoured with tokens of his Father's favour in heaven. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." God forbid that we who are the ministers of Christ should neglect these little ones upon earth, who have their angels in heaven; that honour is undoubtedly done them by the appointment of the Lord of angels, their Lord and our Lord; these celestial guardians are employed, and engage with pleasure to conduct these favourites of heaven through life and death to their mansions in paradise; who would not concur with them, to the utmost, in so benevolent an undertaking? It may encourage us to hope for success as well as acceptance, when we recollect what God himself has engaged to do for them. "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses; one shall say, I am the Lord's, &c. All thy children shall be taught of the Lord.‡

‖ Psal. xxxvii. 26.——cxii. 1. ‖ Lev. xxv. 41, 42.
§ Joel ii. 15, 16. * Psal. xvii. 9, 10.——lxx. 5. 6.
† Matth. xviii. 5, 6. ‡ Isa. xliv. 3—5.——liv. 13.

The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart," &c. In the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded his servant to make with Israel. Moses says to them, ‖ "Ye stand this day, all of you, before the Lord your God; your little ones, &c. that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord, that He may establish thee to-day for a people unto himself, and that He may be unto thee a God, as He hath sworn to thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," &c. See also Joshua viii. 35. Ezra vii. 21. Indeed, the Lord declared to Jeremiah, "Before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee."§ And of John the angel testified, "That he should be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb."* It has been already observed, that our Lord speaks of little children as receiving the kingdom of heaven :† And he said publickly concerning them to his disciples,¶ It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish; after declaring, "whosoever receiveth one such little child in my name, receiveth me." Strange, that after so plain and solemn an admonition, any should reject these little ones who profess to have received Christ Jesus the Lord. No longer let such dare to withhold them from him, or from this ordinance which he has enjoined as a token of that grace, to which young, and old are equally indebted for all the privileges of the new covenant. It is mere trifling, or worse, to pretend that children

‖ Deut. xxix. 10—13. § Jer. i. 5.
* Luke i. 15. † Mark x. 15. ¶ Matt. xviii. 2—4.

may be given up to the Lord, and be made partakers of the blessings of the covenant without being baptized. It may be said, with as much truth and justice of the adult likewise; and not only that they may get safe to heaven, if they are not baptized, but, upon these principles, if they neglect the Lord's supper, and all the other institutions of the gospel. Thus some drones in religion excuse their slothful or contemptuous neglect of publick ordinances, by saying, that they can pray and read a sermon, to as good purpose, at home. Let them tell Jesus so, dispute his authority to appoint ordinances in his church, and ask Him why He has enjoined it upon his disciples in his word, that they should not forsake the assembling of themselves together. His decision, in another case, deserves their attention here, "This do, and leave not the other undone." The performance of one duty will never excuse the neglect of another. A parent may and ought to commit his offspring to God in prayer, and a believer give himself up to the Lord in the same duty; but is that to serve as a substitute for baptism? But children, we are told, may be saved without. True; and it is somewhat charitable in our brethren, to acknowledge that they may be saved at all. But we must beg leave to ask them again, if their children may be made partakers of the grace of the covenant, why will they refuse them the appointed seal of it? If it cannot save them, it certainly cannot endanger their salvation: And Christian parents would do well to consider seriously how they will answer it to their children, or their Lord, if they neglect to set them apart to Him,

and to testify their thankful acceptance of the blessing promised them in the way which He has appointed.

§. 2. But infant baptism, say some, is not only useless but hurtful, both to children and their parents, as it tends to encourage in both a false hope, and an unwarranted dependence on a vain ceremony.

We shall mention, in another place, many advantages that are derived from the ordinance, both to children themselves and their Christian parents, and the evil of neglecting to administer it to them in their infancy.

It seems strange, that any should speak of it as hurtful to be early entered into the school and kingdom of Christ; to be committed to his teaching and government, his protection and blessing as his disciples and his subjects; and to be laid under peculiarly solemn obligations to serve the Lord from our youth. Indeed, the objection is not properly against the use but the abuse of the ordinance. And if we are to discard rules of faith and practice, because they are liable to be abused, or because some do prevent and misapply them, we must renounce not only infant baptism, but almost every other doctrine and institution of the gospel. Some may, and we acknowledge that some (though few Protestant Dissenters) do think more highly of the necessity and efficacy of infant baptism than they ought to think; but is it just to conclude from thence, that this is the case with all who make use of it? We have reason to apprehend, that some who plunge the adult may place an unbe-

coming dependence upon the administration of the ordinance at that time of life, and in that peculiar manner; but we would not, therefore, assert that all do. We would hope better things of some; and we beg leave to inform such as may have entertained a prejudice of this sort concerning their brethren who practise infant baptism, that we universally discourage a superstitious attachment to external modes and forms; that we usually remind parents and others, at the administration of this ordinance, that circumcision availeth nothing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. We caution them against expecting salvation from a godly parentage in the neglect of religion; and frequently admonish them that the advantages derived from thence are valuable talents for which they must give an account, and the misimprovement of which would expose them to severer punishment. We, therefore, give it in charge to Christian parents, that they pray daily for their beloved offspring, that they may be born of the Spirit, and have the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, as well as the body washed with pure water. We also solemnly enjoin it upon them, to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and that they frequently recollect that sacred transaction in which they give them up to God in an everlasting covenant, in order to stir them up to a serious and diligent discharge of all those several duties of a Christian education which are then usually set before them. We also pray repeatedly with them and for them, that they and theirs may be partakers together of the blessings of the covenant; the promis-

es of which we lay before them to quicken both their prayers and endeavours, and to encourage a pleasing hope in a covenant God, for their dear children, especially if he should call them early away.

We are not afraid to ask the candid and impartial, what is there in such a solemnity as this to do our children hurt, or to encourage, either in their parents then, or in them afterwards, an unscriptural hope and confidence? We have proved, in our remarks on the nature and extent of the Christian covenant, that this hope which we encourage is the hope of the gospel; a hope founded on the promises of a faithful covenant-keeping God, who cannot lie, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his mouth: And professing Christians should be very cautious of reflecting upon an application of the token of his covenant to children.

If that is a vain ceremony, and gives encouragement to a groundless deceitful hope, the reflection falls upon the Almighty himself, and He deceived his own people when He ordered them to circumcise their children at eight days; and added, it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.‖ But farther we are asked,

§. 3. If infant baptism be the will of Christ, why did He not more clearly reveal and expressly enjoin it? We answer this objection in part, by denying what it insinuates; viz. That the Scriptures do not say enough concerning it to give satisfaction to the honest, diligent, and unprejudiced inquirer. We ap-

‖ Gen. xvii. 11.

prehend that they do; and, for evidence, must refer to what has been offered in the preceding chapters, especially chapter ii. If any should say, that no passages are there produced in which Christ has required in so many words, "baptize infants." We answer partly by referring to what is offered in §. 2. of the preceding chapter; and partly by asking the objector, whether he does not think himself sufficiently authorized to keep the Christian Sabbath, though Christ has no where said in so many words, "Remember the first day of the week to keep it holy?" Does not he admit women to the Lord's table, though his divine Lord has no where said, "Let women, as well as men, do this in remembrance of me." And as to this ordinance of baptism—Does he baptize believers only? Where has Jesus said, "baptize believers only?" Does he baptize those again, who have been baptized in their infancy? Where is the sacred oracle that says, "baptize the adult, though they have been baptized in their infancy?" Does he require the immersion of the whole body, and renounce baptism administered in any other form? Let him produce his Master's authority requiring of his servant, "Thou shalt baptize only by plunging." If he says, he has authority for these things equal to an express command, we assert the same concerning infant baptism; and apprehend we have used more satisfactory evidences thereof than can be produced in support of many of these tenets and practices. God himself, as we have proved, ordered infants to be taken into covenant. They were thereupon

admitted into covenant with him, and to the external token of it, for near two thousand years together. It is for those, who refuse to continue their privilege, to show when, and in what terms, Jesus or his apostles repealed the grant. We have their authority for laying aside the ceremonies of the Mosaic ritual, and, therefore, they are not now continued in the church; but if no passage in the New Testament can be produced to set aside this Old Testament promise, this everlasting covenant, entirely distinct from the Jewish law; if the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, were all members and ministers of the same church; nay if, as has been proved, the gospel itself is only a confirmation and illustration of this covenant and oath of God to his servant Abraham; if it appears, that the first ministers of Christ understood and declared it to be so; and that they, upon the authority of their Lord's commission, baptized the households of believers, declaring their children, as theirs, holy; and assuring them, that the promise is to them as such: If truths like these are proved from the word of God, none can reasonably dispute our authority for baptizing infants. Some, perhaps, would have expected to find more on the subject both in the discourses and writings of the apostles. But they ought to consider, that few of their discourses, and, perhaps, not all their writings are recorded; that they insisted most on subjects of the greatest importance, and on such as were most generally talked of and disputed in their day; but as none ever doubted then of the propriety of infant baptism, it cannot be wondered at, that the

apostles said no more upon the subject. These are all the objections we have met with to baptizing infants, that have so much as the least plausible appearance of solidity and seriousness, except such as we have occasionally mentioned and answered in different parts of the subject.

As to what some have urged, the want of precedents and examples, that will be sufficiently answered in the next chapter; where we shall endeavour to make it appear, that infant baptism comes recommended to us by the practice of the Christian church in all ages.

CHAP. IV.

Baptism generally administered to Children, in this and former Ages of the Christian Church.

§. 1. IT is well known, that infant baptism is now, and has been long practised by far the greater part of the Christian church. The number in the present day of those that refuse baptism to infants, whatever it may seem in here and there a particular neighbourhood, is very small; and hardly worth mentioning, in comparison of the many churches in all Christian countries, in which the ordinance is administered to them. A learned and well-informed writer on the subject tells us, that infant baptism is authorized in every national church in the Christian world. We pay

no regard to the authority of the church of Rome; yet we cannot think Protestants are obliged to reject infant baptism merely because Papists practise it, any more than they are obliged to disown the Being of a God, the divine mission of Christ, and the reality of a future state, because those doctrines are received in the Romish church. We are to distinguish between the principles which they entertain in common with Christians in general, and such as are the tenets of their peculiar system. We make no doubt of being able to prove, that infant baptism is of the former kind, and consequently that it is, properly speaking, no part of Popery; much less, as it has been repeatedly represented, one of its pillars. It would be endless for us to cite particular authors who have vindicated the practice of baptizing infants, as Anti-pædobaptist writers do of such as oppose it. We shall produce several recommendations of it from whole churches and nations of Protestants in this and the last century, as contained in their publick Confessions or Catechisms.

1. In the xiiith Article of the church in Saxony are these words: "We do also baptize infants, because it is most certain that the promise of grace doth pertain also to infants, and to those only which are ingrafted into the church, &c. and ORIGEN writeth on the 6th of Romans, that the church received the custom of baptizing infants from the apostles. And of this matter there

be many things written and published in our churches, whereby the Anabaptists are refuted."

2. In the Confession of Wirtemberg, chap. x. it is said, "We acknowledge that baptism is to be ministered as well to infants as to those that are grown to full age, and that it is to be used in the church even to the end of the world, &c. Moreover, we teach that he that is so baptized is sprinkled with a spiritual anointing, &c."

3. The Confession of Augsburg (another church in Germany) article ix. says, That young infants are to be baptized, &c.

4. In the confession of the French Protestants, article xxxv. they say, "Seeing that God doth, together with their parents, account their posterity also to be of the church; we affirm, that infants, being born of holy parents, are by the authority of Christ to be baptized."

5. The latter Confession of Helvetia, chap. xx. says, "We condemn the Anabaptists, who deny that young infants, born of faithful parents, are to be baptized: for, according to the doctrine of the gospel, theirs is the kingdom of God; and they are written in the covenant of God; and why then should not the sign of the covenant be given unto them? Instead of circumcision we have baptism."

6. The Confession of Bohemia, chap. xx. on baptism is, "That young children are reckoned in the number of God's people. Therefore according to the word of the Lord, and to many

other testimonies, and the promises made to this beloved age of children; especially as there is extant an example of that ancient ministry ordained of God; viz. Circumcision, which, by reason of the covenant, belonged not only to those of discretion, but therewithal also to young children: For these causes do our ministers, without any doubt, baptise children in the form prescribed, applying to them a sign of most effectual virtue, and most sure witness-bearing of that thing, which, by Christ's own words, is assigned to this age, and is imparted unto it, &c. and so over children this most holy Name is called upon, in which alone there is salvation."

Thus does the general sense of Christians, and the general practice of Christian and Protestant churches, and ministers in this and the last century, recommend Infant Baptism. But it is very far from being the invention of these later ages.

§. 2. If we look into the records of the church of Christ, and the writings of its most celebrated divines who lived many hundred years ago, we shall find the evident traces of this practice, and various recommendations of it. The learned Wall, who took great pains in this inquiry, informs us, that "from the year of our Lord 400 to 1150, no society of men, in all that period of seven hundred years, ever pretended to say it was unlawful to baptize infants. And still nearer the time of our Saviour, there appears to have been only one, (viz. Tertullian) that so much as advised the de-

lay of Infant Baptism ; except one Gregory, who is thought to have delayed baptizing his own children ; and that was upon these mistaken principles, imagining it washed away all sins that had been committed before, and that sins after baptism were peculiarly dangerous, if not mortal. And even Tertullian consented to the baptism of a child in danger of death, from the like superstitious notions of its efficacy, and necessity to salvation.†

† For the information of such as desire to be informed of the origin of the Anabaptists in Germany, we shall insert the following abstract from Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, cent. xvi. sec. iii. part ii.

"They were called MENNONITES from Menno their chief patron and leader, who was born in Friesland in the year 1505; and ANABAPTISTS from their baptizing again such as had been baptized in their infancy. They employed at first arts of persuasion to propagate their doctrine. They preached in a manner that seemed proper to gain the multitude, and related a great number of visions and revelations with which they pretended to be favoured from above. But when they saw that these methods of making proselytes were not attended with such rapid success as they fondly expected, in the year 1521, under Munzer, Stubner, Storck, and others, they excited unhappy commotions in Saxony and the adjacent parts.

"In 1525, they assembled a numerous army, composed chiefly of the peasants of Swabia, Thuringia, Franconia, and Saxony, and declared war against all laws, government, and magistrates, under the chimerical pretence that Christ was now to take the reins of civil and ecclesiastical government into his hands." He goes on to mention several outrages which they committed, and especially at Munster, in the year 1533. But, without entering more particularly into so unpleasing a scene, we shall conclude this extract with the following account that author gives of the doctrines of such of them as, to use his words, "had some sparks of

AUGUSTIN, who lived from the middle to near the end of the fourth century, and flourished about 370 years after Christ, wrote much on the subject; and spoke of Infant Baptism as what was universally practised in the church in his day, and had been so ever since its establishment.—Arguing with Pelagius on original sin, he asks, "Why are infants baptized for the remission of sin, if they have none?" There can be no doubt, but that his opponent would immediately and publickly have denied the fact, as the shortest way of confuting such an argument, if it had not been indisputably certain that they did baptize infants; but all he attempts is to evade the consequence.‡ Nay, he mentions it with displeasure, as a scandal raised of him, that he denied the sacrament of Baptism to little children, "Se ab hominibus infamari quod neget parvulis Baptismi sacramen-

reason left, and reflection enough to reduce their notions into a certain form. They taught, among other things, that the church of Christ ought to be exempt from all sin——that all things ought to be common among the faithful——that all usury, tythes, and tribute, ought to be abolished——that the baptism of infants was an invention of the devil——that every Christian was invested with power to preach the gospel—that in the kingdom of Christ civil magistrates were absolutely useless, and that God still continued to reveal his will to chosen persons by dreams and visions."

In support of these positions, he refers to FUESLIN, SECKENDORF's Hist. Luther, lib. i. p. 192—304. lib. ii. p. 12. SLEIDAN, lib. v. p. 47. and JOACH. CAMERARII Vita Melanct. p. 44. Herm. Schyn Hist. Menon. chap. vi. p. 116, &c. &c. For their sentiments at large, see a Confession of Faith of the Waterlandians (another term they were known by) composed by Rues.

‡ Wall, v. 1. p. 280, 281.

tum." Augustin, after mentioning these words of our Saviour, John iii. 5. adds, "We confess that infants ought to be baptized for the remission of sins, according to the rule of the universal church, and according to the doctrine of the gospel; because the Lord hath determined that the kingdom of heaven should be conferred upon none but baptized persons."‖ And he elsewhere says, this is but what the church always held; and that he never remembered to have met with any thing to the contrary in any writer, i. e. any thing denying the universality of the practice in the Christian church: The case of Tertullian, Augustin well knew, was no just exception, as he, far from denying either the fact itself, or the propriety of baptizing infants, allowed of it in some circumstances himself. Augustin's words are, "Baptizandos esse parvulos nemo dubitet; quando nec illi hinc dubitant, qui, ex parte aliquâ contradicunt." And, in another place, giving his sense of those words of Paul, "else were your children unclean, but now are they holy;" he says, "for there were then Christian infants that were sanctified, some by the authority of one of their parents, some by the consent of both, &c."

‖ What Dr. Gill has advanced to evade the credit of this and the other testimonies of Augustin and Pelagius, is clearly refuted by the late learned Mr. Brekel, in his defence of Infant Baptism in point of antiquity; from which Pamphlet, and that sensible piece of Mr. Towgood's, intitled, The Baptism of Infants a reasonable Service; or Mr. Wall's History of Infant baptism, several of the following quotations are selected.

—It is remarked, that Augustin more than a hundred times used the term sanctified for baptized.

We shall next cite a passage in the 2d canon of the Council of Carthage, held in the year of our Lord 418, which consisted of 214 bishops of Africa, and of which Augustin was president. Fidus, an African bishop, who lived 150 years before, thought that infants should not be baptized till they were eight days old. Pelagius, being of opinion that they derived no sin from Adam, did not think it necessary that they should be baptized as soon as they were born. Celestius thought that infants should be baptized, but yet concurred with Pelagius in denying original sin. To these different sentiments this canon referred, and the passage may be thus translated.‡ "In like manner, our judgment is, that whosoever shall at any time deny that little ones, even as soon as they are born, should be baptized, (as did Fidus and Pelagius) or say they should be baptized, though they have no sin from Adam, (referring to Celestius) let him be Anathema."

John Chrysostom, cotemporary with Augustin, calls Baptism their circumcision, but says of it, that it is not confined to a particular day, (viz. the eighth) as that rite was to the Jews, but one that is in the very beginning of his age, (he uses

[‡ We have thought it unnecessary to insert the Latin and Greek originals, which are quoted in the English Edition, as the author has faithfully translated them.]

the term παρα παιδιον elsewhere for a new-born infant) may receive this circumcision made without hands. Compare Col. ii. 11. and our interpretation of that expression of Paul, circumcision made without hands, part ii. chap. ii. ad fin. note.

Gregory Nazianzen, who lived about the same time, or rather earlier, has these words, (in an oration on Baptism) when speaking, "Shall we baptize them? (i. e. infants) Yes, by all means, if there be any danger; for it is better that they be sanctified without their knowledge, than that they should die unsealed and uninitiated. And a ground of this to us is circumcision, which was a typical seal, &c." This writer has other passages to the same purpose.

The prevailing sentiments and practice of the church at, and indeed before that time, are very evident from these passages.

But we will proceed to examine others of an earlier date, written nearer the time of the apostles.

About the year of our Lord 250, a question was started by Fidus, above mentioned, not whether infants should be baptized, (for neither he nor any then made the least doubt of that) but "whether the baptism of infants should not be deferred till the eighth day, according to the law of circumcision." Upon this a council of sixty-six bishops (at which Cyprian presided) assembled at Carthage in the year 253, and united in

the following decree or letter, directed to Fidus. "As to the case of infants; whereas you think they should not be baptized and sanctified within two or three days after they are born; it appears to us all who are here met in Council far otherwise. For as to that which you thought should be done, (meaning deferring their baptism till eight days old) "there is not one that approves of it; but we rather judge that the mercy and grace of God is to be denied to none of the children of men." And, after urging many reasons with Fidus for baptizing children as soon as they are born, they tell him, "It is their opinion, that Baptism ought least of all to be refused to a new-born infant, as it has then no sin except the contagion which it has contracted from its birth as a descendant of Adam."

We shall conclude this article with the following remark of Mr. Towgood upon it.

"Now as this was but 150 years after the apostles; and some of these bishops may reasonably be supposed seventy or eighty years old; if they were baptized in their infancy, (which can with no reason be doubted) it carries up the practice to within eighty years of the apostles themselves. And, at the time of their infancy, there were many alive who were born within the age of the apostle, and could not but certainly and infallibly know what the apostolic practice and appointment was to this matter."

ORIGEN, presbyter of Alexandria, in the year 230, speaking of little children as under the guardianship of angels, (as mentioned Matth. xviii. 10.) queries, whether that their guardianship of them commenced from their baptism, or even their birth. Vid. his Comment. in loc. In another place, he speaks of Infant Baptism as the practice or usage of the church, and mentions it as administered to them for the remission of sins, and to do away their original pollution; of which he quotes that text, Job xv. 14. as a proof, What is man, that he should be clean? &c. See Origen in Levit. Hom. 8 and 14. Nay, in his Comment. on the epistle to the Romans, lib. 5. speaking of the administration of the ordinance to little children; he says expressly, "On account of this (referring to original sin,) the church has received a tradition from the apostles to apply baptism even to little children." This Christian Father seems to use the word tradition nearly in the sense in which the apostle Peter had used it before him, 1 Peter i. 18. The practice of baptizing infants had been, handed down to them from the apostles, in an uninterrupted succession, as a vain conversation had been to that race of men, from their fathers. A testimony like this, in favour of Infant Baptism, from one of Origen's character, and who was born within about eighty years of the apostolic age, must have weight with every one who pays a proper regard to the practice of the primitive church.

But we will produce some few evidences of it from the writers who lived near still to the time of the apostles. We have already observed, that TERTULLIAN, who lived nearer the latter end of the second century, is spoken of as advising, in general, the delay of baptism, or that it should not be administered to any in very early life. He says concerning it, "In regard to the condition, disposition, and age of every one, the delay of baptism is more profitable; especially in the case of little children. Why should an innocent age be in haste for the forgiveness of sins? —With no less reason (the baptism of) unmarried persons ought to be put off, who are exposed to temptation, &c."—He has other similar expressions connected with these. But these are sufficient to shew, that infants were usually baptized in his day; and that he himself did not in all cases, disapprove of it, far from it; indeed he entertained such notions of the pondus (as he calls it) the importance of it, that he rather advised a layman should administer it, where a regular minister could not be procured, than that any should die without it. But one might infer from his words, that baptism was denied to all unmarried, as justly, as that it was denied to infants. His reason for advising the delay of it, in both cases, was plainly this; lest they should, after baptism, fall into sin; strangely retaining these two incoherent sentiments, that without baptism

none could be saved (præscribitur nemini sine baptismo competire salutem ;) and yet that the ordinance should be delayed as long as might be, as sins after baptism would be next to unpardonable. But after all, it is doubtful, whether he does not refer merely to the offspring of Heathens, in all that he says, concerning the procrastination of Infant Baptism, without intending to advise Christian parents to delay baptizing their children, as, in his paraphrase on 1 Cor. vii. 14. he speaks expressly of the children of the faithful as designed for sanctification, and by that for salvation. And (not at all consistent with the sense put upon those words by our modern Anti-pædo-baptists) he gives that as the meaning of the apostle in the term holy.

Irenæus, another of the primitive Christian fathers, lived thirty years before Tertullian, and flourished about the year of our Lord 167.

This writer lib. ii. chap. 39. has this expression when speaking of Christ ; "He came of himself to save all ; I mean, who by him, are born again unto God, infants, little children, children, young men, and the aged." All understand Irenæus as intending, by regenerated or born again, either that saving change which is now usually meant by the term regeneration, or baptism. In the former sense it testifies that he believed infants capable of renewing grace, and those that do cannot consistently think them unfit for bap-

tism :—But if he meant more directly that ordinance, he speaks herein expressly of infants as then baptized. In either sense it is strong to our purpose.—But to prove that Baptism was more directly intended by the phrase here, other passages have been quoted from this writer, in which he uses the term regenerated from baptism: And, indeed, the learned Wall has produced many to prove that this was the usual sense of the word before, in, and after the time of this Christian father. Those we shall omit; and only take notice of one in Irenæus, in which, speaking of the commission of our Lord to his apostles to baptize, he says, "When he gave them the commission of regenerated unto God, he said unto them, Go, disciple all nations, baptizing them." And another, in which he speaks in so many words of baptism as the regeneration unto God.

We shall only add here, that it is thought this writer was born some time before the death of the apostle John.

Justin Martyr, who flourished only forty years after the apostles, has, in his apology directed to Antonius Pius, an expression similar to that of Irenæus last mentioned; speaking of the baptized, he says, they are regenerated by the same way or manner of regeneration as we ourselves were regenerated, being washed with water in the name of God the Father and Lord of all, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit.

This passage gives us the plain form in which the ordinance was administered in those early ages; viz. By only washing with water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and he has another, from which it seems probable that it was applied to children in obedience to that command of Christ to his ministers, disciple all nations, baptizing them; viz. That wherein he speaks of some who from children were discipled to Christ. As it is evident from hence, that in his day they entered children among the disciples of Christ, and we know of no form of initiation but that of baptizing; there is reason to think that Justin referred to that, as he makes use of the word μαθητευω, by which that order of Christ is expressed in the Evangelist. Jesus said to his ministers, Go, disciple all nations, baptizing them; here one of them speaks of some who were discipled from their childhood. And Justin, we are told, wrote this only a hundred years after that institution was recorded by Matthew.

Let but that regard be paid to these few extracts which is due to the testimonies of honest men, and of men whose stations in the church gave them an opportunity of knowing the practice of it in and before their respective periods, and they will be sufficient to convince every one who is not determined to reject all evidence of the fact, "that infants were baptized in the primitive ages of Christianity." We shall next endeavour to prove,

§ 8. That the practice of the church in baptizing infants is founded on the authority of the apostles themselves; and that, as a church, it is herein formed upon their model. Had the propriety of baptizing infants been disputed in the time of the apostles, as it has lately been, or as the doctrine of justification, and the expediency of continuing circumcision and other Jewish rites in the church were then, we should probably have met with much more than there is in their writings concerning it; but as children had been admitted to the seal of the covenant for two thousand years, and their right to it was never called in question by any, it was needless to insist largely upon it. Indeed, (says the learned Lightfoot in his Harmony of the New Testament, p. 10.) "there needed no mention of baptizing infants in the New Testament, as it had been as ordinarily used in the church of the Jews, as ever it hath been in the Christian church. It was enough to mention, that Christ established baptism for an ordinance under the gospel, and then it was well enough known who should be baptized by the use of this ordinance of old. It is a good plea, because there is no forbidding of the baptizing of infants in the gospel, therefore they are to be baptized; for that having been in common usage among the Jews, that infants should be baptized, as well as men and women, our Saviour would have given some special prohibition, if he intended that they should have

been excluded. So that silence, in this case, does necessarily conclude approbation to have the practice continued, which had been used of old before." This author produces several testimonies from Jewish writers to prove their baptizing the children of proselytes with their parents; among the rest one from Maimon, Who says, "An Israelite that takes a little Heathen child, or that finds an Hebrew infant, and baptizes him for a proselyte, behold, he is a proselyte." Nay, says he, "It was as well known before the gospel began, that men, women, and children, were baptized, as it is known that the sun is up at noonday."

Yet the New Testament is not silent upon this head; for, besides the passages before cited, we have repeated accounts, in the New Testament, of their baptizing households. Of Lydia it is said, that "the Lord opened her heart, that she attended to the things that were spoken of Paul, and she was baptized and her household.*" Here we remark, that a woman, born of unbelieving parents, upon embracing the gospel of Christ, as preached by Paul, was baptized; as, her parents not being Christians, she could not have been baptized in her infancy. And upon this principle, by the way, we may, in part, account for our Lord's not being baptized in his infancy, as he was the offspring of Jewish parents. He was

* Acts xvi. 15.

circumcised in infancy according to their law; but because he intended that rite should be superseded by baptism, in order to render his undertakings complete, or, as he says, to fulfil all righteousness, he was baptized previous to his entrance on his publick ministry; and, indeed, it is not easy to say, either by whom he could be baptized, or tendered to baptism when he was a child. But to return to the instance before us: Lydia was baptized and her household. Before she was admitted to this ordinance, she received the word of Christ, as being the first professing Christian in the family, she could not otherwise have been baptized; but we read nothing either of the faith, nor of the ages of her family; nothing more than that they were baptized as the household of Lydia: When her heart was opened to receive the word, she was baptized and her household. Will any, can any believe she had no children in her household? Let them say of what her household was composed, if she had no children. It is not to be thought, a person in her station should keep a number of servants. Yet if she had servants, and they were baptized merely as hers, this was extending the grant still farther. But whatever her household was, whether infant, children, youths, or servants, all that appears from the text is, that they were baptized, as the household of believing Lydia. Though, if they had believed, their faith would probably have been recorded as well as that of Lydia, especially

if the apostles had required, that none but believers should be admitted to the ordinance, as that precaution would be necessary to prevent a misapplication of the ordinance under the sanction of their authority.

Paul, whose ministry was succeeded in this instance, speaks † of his having also baptized the household of Stephanas; and though it is said of that household, that they afterwards ministered to the saints, they might do that either by acts of charity, or publick instructions, as the time there spoken of, and yet be children when they were baptized; for he speaks of that family as the first fruits of Achaia, being the first converts there made to the gospel.

We read of another household which this apostle, or his companion Silas, baptized; in Acts xvi. 33, 34. That of the jailor at Thyatira, of whom it is said, "He was baptized, and all his, (his whole household) straightway." But the manner in which the words in the next verse are rendered in our English Bible, has inclined many to think that all his domestics believed, and, consequently, were none of them children: "And rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." The original words are, Και ηγαλλιασατο πανοικι πεπιστευκως τω Θεω. These words by no means imply that his house believed; nay, on the contrary, a singular term is used to express believing, that can properly be applied to him

* 1 Cor. i. 16.

only. The fairest and most literal translation of the sentence is, "and he, rejoiced in (or over) all his house, having, (i. e. he having) believed in God." And the word to express his believing is so far from including the faith of his family, that there seems a peculiar propriety in the term, when considered as referring (not to their faith, but) to his having surrendered them in baptism to God. He now rejoiced in and over all his house with a new, a devout joy, as having, in that solemn ordinance, committed himself and them into the hands of God, hoping for his own salvation and theirs from him, on the credit of that declaration which Paul had just made to him, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house." It is well known, that the Greek word here used for believing, often expresses such an act of trust in the New Testament; among other places, compare John ii. 24. Rom. iii. 2. 2 Tim. i. 12.

Thus the words not only say nothing of his household's faith, but rather imply that they were incapable of it, as they express his act only on their account and his own. Indeed, it is not merely improbable, that there should be no children in all these households; but equally strange that such a term should be used, as naturally leads every unprejudiced reader to think immediately of children, if the apostles refused to baptize children themselves, and would have them excluded from the ordinance in all future ages.

But little more need be said to prove that children are included in the term, household, as it is plainly used to include them not only in the Old Testament, but, likewise, by this apostle Paul himself. When Pharaoh bade Joseph's brethren go and bring up their households,‡ it is plain, they understood it as including their children; as it is said, Gen. xlvi. 5. "They thereupon carried their little ones and their wives into Egypt." Paul says, 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5. "A bishop must rule well his own house, or household;" (for it is the same word) and then he explains it, "having his children in subjection with all gravity, &c." When therefore it is said, the apostles baptized households, it is saying, in other words, that they baptized children; and the most probable reason for their not using the term, children, is that servants were sometimes admitted with children to the ordinance, and, therefore, an expression is made use of that includes both. Thus it appears, that the practice of the church in baptizing infants is truly primitive and apostolic. Indeed, it is utterly incredible, that it should otherwise have been, as we have seen it was, universally received and preserved in all parts, and in all ages. No such attempts were ever made to introduce and establish this rite as were made to propagate the corruptions of Popery, and yet it has been by far more generally received than they. Its authority was never disputed by the

‡ Gen. xlv. 18, 19.

faithful, in the early ages of Christianity, as was that of those Antichristian innovations. Nay, of all the different sects into which the church was divided in the third and fourth centuries, and which were always ready to detect and oppose every thing in each other, that did not appear authorized by the word of God, not one ever upbraided the other with baptizing infants as an innovation: But, though of very different sentiments on many other doctrines of the gospel, in this they all agreed; and those whose other principles would have inclined them to oppose the practice in their day, and to have disputed the divine original of it, if its divine original could have been questioned; even they declared, that they never heard nor read of any, whether true Christian, heretic, or schismatic, who denied baptism to infants.

Having in our enquiry found these strong and manifold evidences of the divine original and authority of infant baptism; we must beg leave to add the following, as additional reasons for disapproving of the practice of our modern Anabaptists; viz.

That we have not met with one text, in the whole Bible, that requires the immersion of the whole body in Christian baptism.

Not one in which Christ commanded his ministers to baptize believers, much less believers only.

No command, either from him or his apostles, to baptize such again in adult years, who were

baptized in their infancy: nor any word that authorizes us to call a second washing, Baptism.

No one passage, that requires those should be washed a second time, by plunging at any age, if they have been once baptized by sprinkling, or pouring of water, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Nor have we met with a single instance recorded in the New Testament, in which the descendants of Christian parents were baptized in adult years.

We shall conclude the subject with some hints on the religious use of infant baptism.

CHAP. V.

The Evil of neglecting to baptize the Infant-Offspring of Christians, and the Advantages of a proper Administration of the Ordinance.

§. 1. THOUGH we cannot but apprehend, that the evils of Antipædo-baptist principles are great and many, yet we are far from charging all those improprieties and disorders, which some persons of that denomination have occasioned, upon those distinguishing principles. We have the pleasure to know some that profess them, who are of a spirit very unlike that from which those evils, in other instances, have arisen. Yet we cannot but think, that had many in this and the last age been

less violently attached to those peculiarities, and more zealous to establish the kingdom of Christ than a favourite mode and party ; had they spent that time in endeavouring to acquire a more accurate and thorough acquaintance with the gospel, which they have employed in disputing about Baptism, and in cultivating, in themselves and others, a spirit of candour, humility, integrity, and benevolence, many of those evils might have been prevented, which have been occasioned by their conduct, discourses, and writings. But, without enlarging on so disagreeable a topic, we must beg leave to remind all who wish well to the cause of Christ, and the rising generation, of the injuries done to both by denying the seal of God's covenant to the children of his people, and by rebaptizing those in adult years, that were discipled to Christ by that ordinance in their infancy.

The ministers and disciples of Christ are herein now repeating a conduct, on account of which Jesus was highly displeased with his first followers.

They are rejecting those as common and unclean, which a Chrisian apostle has pronounced holy ; and treat those as mere outcasts and subjects of satan's kingdom, concerning whom our Lord has declared, "of such is the kingdom of heaven."

They go before God in repealing an act of grace which he has not repealed but established ; and reflect upon an institution of the great Head of the church in which his people rejoiced through many generations.

They dispute the authority of the only baptism used in the Christian church for many hundred years, and reduce all that are thus taken into covenant with God, to the state of unbaptized heathens.

The grant of the gospel of grace is hereby represented as less merciful and extensive than that of the law of Moses, which admitted the children of God's people into his covenant.

Hereby Christian parents are discouraged from putting in their claim to those new covenant blessings which are promised to their children, and are deprived of a powerful motive to prayer and a Christian education.

Children themselves may, also, in other respects, suffer more from the neglect than many are aware, in consequence of the affront offered even by those who profess themselves the people of God, both to his covenant and the seal of it; and as they are denied a valuable preservative from sin and folly, as well as encouraged to slight the honour and privilege of a godly parentage.

In consequence of these principles, many that are born of Christian parents live long in a Christian country before the very initiating ordinance of the gospel is administered to them; and to some it is never administered at all: while, on the other hand, not a few are washed a second time, (with all the solemnity of a Christian institution) without the least authority from Christ or his

apostles, and contrary to the very nature and design of Christian baptism.

As a very awful punishment was, by the express command of God, to be inflicted upon every one of the seed of Abraham to whom the ordinance of circumcision was not duly administered in infancy, "That soul, says the Almighty, shall be cut off from his people, he hath broken my covenant;"* Christian ministers and parents would do well to take heed of refusing or neglecting to apply this ordinance of Baptism to their children; which is, as we have before proved, the circumcision of Christ.

§. 2. We are asked, indeed, "What good can baptism do to little children?" But if the Israelites had made an objection like that against circumcising their children, would they not justly have incurred the divine displeasure? and yet they might have urged the query with as much reason; "What good can circumcision do to such little children?" Before we answer this question, we will beg leave to put another to those who propose this to us; viz. "What good can Baptism do to the adult? nay, what good is it intended to do to them?" It is supposed they are true believers then; this, therefore, must be to testify and strengthen their faith; but considered in this light, it coincides with the design of the Lord's Supper. So that, upon this supposition, we have two positive institutions to answer the

* Gen. xvii. 14.

same end; both intended to express and promote Christian establishment and edification, not one to initiate in Christian privileges, or signify our title to them. Adult baptism, we are told, and the Lord's Supper, together with the other ordinances of the gospel, are to promote Christian edification; but are they of themselves sufficient to answer that end? If they owe their efficacy to a divine blessing, have any persons authority to say that blessing will not accompany this ordinance when administered to children? or will any dare to assert that blessing with it will be of no avail to them? Their capacity of receiving a divine impression, and our encouragement to hope for the gracious regards of God towards our dear children, have been already considered. And if born again of water and the Spirit, they shall be a seed to serve him, accounted to the Lord for a generation: shall be happy in life, at death, and beyond it.——If they are continued to years of understanding, the early administration of this ordinance to them may be made, under God, a means of great good to them, as laying a proper foundation for addressing many valuable instructions, exhortations, cautions, admonitions, and encouragements to them as they grow up, whereby they may be preserved from a thousand evils to which they are exposed in the years of childhood and youth, and formed to that temper and conduct which tends to promote their health, peace and prosperity; to fit them for an honour-

able and useful passage through this life, and for a happy departure out of it. Indeed, hereby parents * are laid under peculiar obligations to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, as they are solemnly exhorted, and do actually engage so to do at the administration of the ordinance: And the child certainly reaps the advantage of that sacred rite which obliges its parents to train it up in the way, in which it should go. At this ordinance, ministers have a peculiarly favourable opportunity of addressing practical intructions and exhortations to parents, that may both assist them in directing the education of their children, and stir them up to a faithful discharge of all its important duties.——The serious recollection of this sacred solemnity has, we hope, been a powerful restraint to many in an hour of temptation. "How shall I, who have been solemnly consecrated to the Lord, do this wickedness and sin against God?" Nay, more, we trust some have been engaged to consider themselves as hereby bound to walk in newness of life.——It certainly tends to cherish in the minds of children a peculiar esteem and affection for their parents, as those by whom they were thus introduced into the covenant of God; as well as to animate the parent's prayers and endeavours

* The Reader is desired to remember that, in the whole of what is offered upon the subject, we suppose that children are given up to the Lord in baptism by their parents, or by those who have the immediate care of them, if left orphans, in early life; those being, we apprehend, the only proper persons for such an engagement.

for their everlasting welfare; and to encourage that hope which is his best support when called to the tender trial of following his beloved offspring early to the grave.

These are some of the advantages which the children of Christian parents derive from an early dedication to the Lord in Baptism; and these, compared with what was said of the divine favour expressed towards such, chap. i. §. 2. and of their capacities, chap. iii. §. 1. sufficiently prove, that the objection against Infant Baptism, as useless, is without any solid foundation.

We shall now, in the CONCLUSION,

1. Offer some practical instructions and exhortations to such Christian parents as have given up their children to the Lord in this ordinance.

You will not, you cannot imagine that you have nothing more to do for your little ones than thus to devote them to God. A parental affection inclines you to think, and care, and labour for them, that they may be furnished with the necessaries and conveniences of life. And does not that affection, in concurrence with the gospel of Christ, which you profess, and the sacred engagements of the baptismal covenant, call upon you to watch with at least equal tenderness and diligence for their precious souls? All souls are precious. Jesus thought them so, or he would not have laboured, and shed his precious blood to redeem them: And every one surely must think them so, that believes they are to live for ever

in heaven or in hell. If you are thoroughly sensible of the worth of your own souls, you cannot but be concerned for the souls of your children; those dear parts of yourselves. Look upon them daily as committed by providence, in early life immediately to your care: And may God preserve you from the guilt of neglecting their souls! "I have often thought (said the pious Mr. Janeway, addressing himself to parents,) that Christ speaks to you as Pharaoh's daughter did to the mother of Moses, Take this child and nurse it, train it up, for me." You may probably have but little time wherein to fulfil the duties of this trust. Your dear offspring may be soon removed by death; or, if not, it will not be long before you must leave them. And remember it is an unkind, a wicked world in which you will leave them; a world by which the souls of many young persons have been undone for ever. Look forward to the solemn day, when you must meet your beloved offspring at the tribunal of Christ. God grant that you may then present them with joy to Jesus, as their Lord and yours, and as the children which he has graciously given you. Do you not most fervently wish that you may? It becomes you then to look well both to them and to yourselves. Yes, to yourselves; and to yourselves, indeed, in the first place: to the sincerity of your own faith in Jesus, and of your love and subjection to him, as your Saviour and Lord; and to take true pains to keep alive a constant and powerful sense of divine things in your own souls,

or you will not be like to pay a properregard to the souls of your children. Say not, we cannot give our children grace. Surely none can urge that to excuse their neglect of them, but such as are given up to a most dreadful blindness and hardness of heart. If you cannot give your children grace, you can give them religious instructions; and the word of God says to you, "train up a child in the way in which he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Trifle not with the sacred command; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. You are under peculiar obligations so to do, as you would not incur the guilt of dealing treacherously with God, and betraying a trust of the highest importance. Instruct them early, plainly, frequently, and with all possible seriousness and tenderness. Endeavour to give them such notions of God as may at once tend to excite their holy veneration of him as the greatest, and to encourage a sacred delight and confidence in him, as the best of beings; explain the nature, attributes, and offices of the Father, Son, and Spirit in whose name they were baptized. Labour to give them humbling and affecting views of the depravity of human nature, signified by the use of water in that ordinance; of the exceeding sinfulness of sin; of their need of redemption by the blood of Christ, and of being saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. Remind them of the nature and necessi-

ty of evangelical repentance, and of a living faith as that which purifies the heart, works by love, overcomes the world, and keeps the commands of God. Take pains to impress the mind early with a powerful conviction of the frailty of human nature, and the vanity of this present evil world; the solemn and momentous consequences of death, and the vast importance of being ready for that great change. Lead forward their meditations often to the solemnities of the judgment-day; set before them the eternal glories of heaven, and the unutterable miseries of hell, as consequent upon it; and use every alarming and alluring motive which the word of God suggests to engage them to flee from the wrath to come, and to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Lay before them, as plainly and concisely as you can, the leading evidences of the divine original of the Scriptures, as illustrated in Dr. Doddridge's two discourses upon that subject. Press earnestly upon them a sacred regard to the word of God, and all the ordinances of the gospel. Explain to them the obligations, nature and design of all its institutions. "The words which I command thee, said God to his people, thou shalt teach diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."* Inculcate upon them the honour and obedience due to parents, magistrates, ministers and

* Deut. vi. 7.

teachers; and a conscientious regard to the inviolable laws of truth and justice in all they say and do. Recommend to them the amiable graces of humility, meekness, modesty, candour and benevolence. Remind them of the importance of early habits of diligence, frugality, and self-denial. In a word, teach them to observe all things which Jesus, their Lord and yours, has commanded, and, after all, to seek acceptance and eternal life through him, in whom all the seed of Israel shall be justified and shall glory.

You will, likewise, remember the importance of being examples of what you recommend to your children. Never indulge yourselves in doing or saying those things before them in which you would not wish they should imitate you; nor neglect those duties, either in the house of God or your own, which you would recommend to their diligent performance. They are soon capable, and have many opportunities, of observing your conversation and behaviour; and in vain may you expect that your children should pay a proper regard to your instructions, if they see that you do not act upon them yourselves. Let them learn from your life, as well as from your lips, how they ought to walk and glorify God.

You will also find it of importance to preserve good order, and wholesome discipline in your families. It is the part of a good Christian, as well as of a good minister, to rule well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.

Admonish, and, if correction be necessary, withhold it not. "He that hateth his son spareth the rod, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes," Prov. xxii. 15. xiii. 24. xix. 12. xxiii. 13, 14. Remember Eli and his two sons," 1 Sam. iii.

Manifest, likewise, in your houses a constant regard to the word of God and to prayer; offering up daily the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and paying your vows together there unto the Most High. Pray for yourselves, that you may be assisted and succeeded in all the duties which you owe to those who are committed to your care; and pray for your children, that their hearts may be disposed to receive instruction in the love of it.

The consciousness and recollection of a faithful discharge of the duties of this important trust will afford you satisfaction thro' life, and you will enjoy the comfort of it in seasons at which you will most need support and consolation; viz. when standing over their graves and hastening to your own. If your endeavours are not so successful as you could have wished, yet shall you be glorious in the eyes of the Lord; but if you are made instruments of forming your rising race for God, they, most eminently will be your joy here, and your crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord.

It now only remains that we,

2. Suggest some hints to such young persons as were baptized in their infancy.

Gratefully acknowledge the condescension and grace of God in Christ Jesus, in admitting you so early into his covenant.

Be thankful to pour parents who then committed you, as their beloved offspring, to the care, and devoted you to the service of their Father, as your Father, and of their God, as your God.

Consider seriously how far you have performed the vows of God which are upon you, and have approved yourselves dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Beware of the aggravated guilt of forsaking the covenant of the Lord, and of dealing treacherously with the God of your fathers.

Acknowledge past violations of it with contrition, and pray humbly and fervently for pardoning mercy, in the name of Jesus the Mediator.

Renew your applications daily to the blood of sprinkling, and beg that the renewing influences of divine grace may be poured out upon you abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Shun all such companions and principles as would teach you to make light either of the privileges or obligations of the Christian covenant, or of that significant seal of it which was administered to you in your infancy. Choose those for your companions, especially for life, who know the God of their fathers, and serve Him with a perfect heart and willing mind.

Embrace every opportunity of attending upon the administration of this ordinance to other children, in order to renew the proper impressions of it upon your own minds, and to promote a constant and governing regard to its sacred engagements.

Having been entered among the disciples of

Christ, learn of him as your Master, and subject yourselves in all things to his authority and discipline. Endeavour to promote the love of Christ, and a becoming zeal for the advance of his interest all around you.

Thankfully acknowledge, and diligently improve the privilege of a Christian education, and resolve that you and your house shall serve the Lord, if you have ever families of your own.

Be not always children, tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine; in malice be ye children, but in understanding be ye men. It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.

Manifest a becoming affection towards all true Christians, as members of that Body, into which you have been baptized, and of which Jesus is the Head.

To conclude, renew and confirm your baptismal engagements at the Lord's Supper; and may you be found living and honourable members of that body the church, of which it is said, "Christ lov- it and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish."*

* Ephes. v. 25—27.

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